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MEMOIRS OF A POSITIVIST

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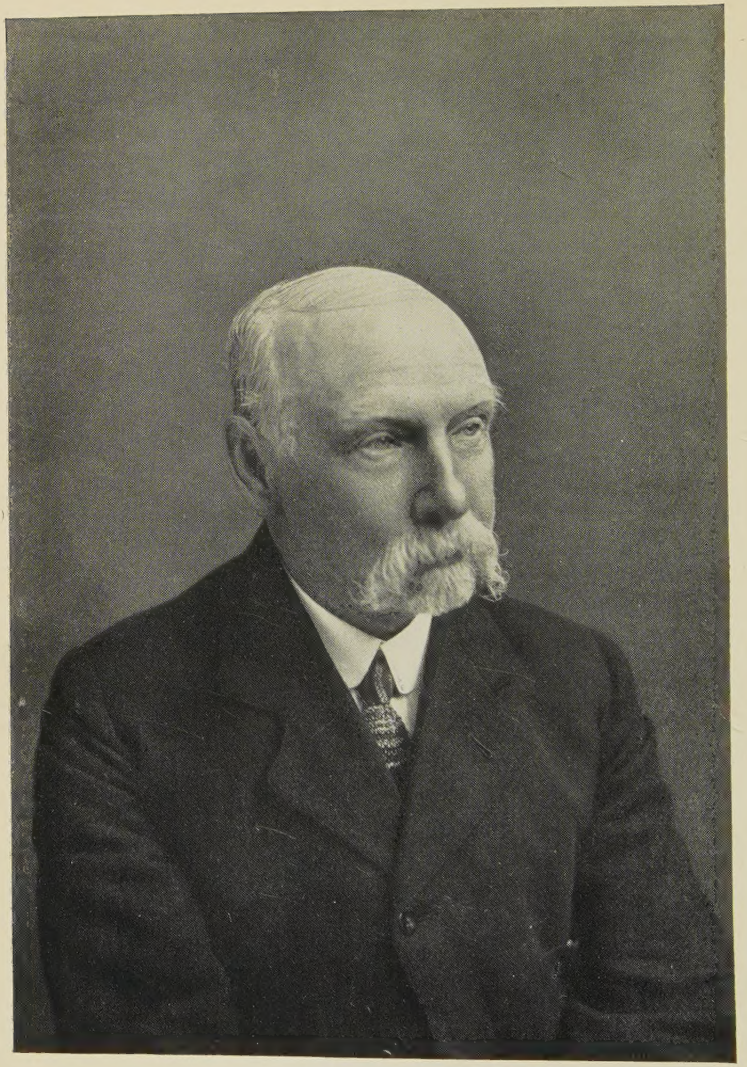

MALCOLM QUIN

MEMOIRS OF A POSITIVIST

BY

MALCOLM QUIN

FORMERLY HEAD OF THE POSITIVIST COMMUNITY,
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE

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'A Sower Went Forth to Sow"

"Your materials are disorder; with them you must create order."—Words quoted by AUGUSTE COMTE.

TO

MY WIFE

WHO, DURING THIRTY YEARS OF MY

RELIGIOUS WORK, WORKED

WITH ME

PREFACE

In one respect at least, if in no other, I might claim the sanction of Benvenuto Cellini for this volume. He lays down the principle that autobiographers—always supposing that they have any title to be autobiographers at all—"ought not to attempt so fine an enterprise till they have passed the age of forty." Any one who has waited till he is seventy before writing his life may be allowed to have handsomely fulfilled this particular condition. After all, however, the question that will naturally be asked, in the case of those who obtrude their own story upon the public, is not so much how old they are, but whether the story itself was worth telling.

How far the story told in the following pages was worth telling it must be left to its readers to decide. Strictly speaking, it is not an autobiography, in any merely personal sense. It is the story of a movement of which it is at least permissible to say that it has been a part, however small a part, of the distinctive religious life of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Perhaps, too, little noise as it made amidst the louder energies of its age, the European Positivist movement—for European it certainly was, both in spirit and in fact—has not yet lost its importance. It cannot, indeed, lose it until the religious problem which gave it its meaning—the problem of determining the relations between ancient faith and modern science—has been finally solved. No one who considers the present distracted state of the religious world, and who compares it—as I can do—with what it was fifty years since, will say that such a solution has yet been found.

Such title as I have to tell the story of Positivism—especially English Positivism—may be simply indicated. I have no claim to a place among its more distinguished

personalities. Some forty years ago, however, it fell to me to be formally and publicly consecrated to the Positivist "priesthood" by one of Comte's immediate disciples, Dr. Congreve, who was the founder, or originating mind, of English religious Positivism; and, as it happens, I am the only one of its few active European "apostles" to have enjoyed this somewhat futile distinction. What is more to the purpose, I was actually engaged, for thirty years—largely under Dr. Congreve's direction—in trying to found a Positivist church, and form a Positivist priesthood. The attempt, so far as I was concerned—as I may say here quite simply and unequivocally—was a failure, just as Dr. Congreve's own similar attempt was a failure. But a given "failure" may have a deeper interest and significance than a given "success." Up to the present, Comte, who possessed both genius and science, has, as a religious founder, been less "successful" than Joseph Smith and Mrs. Eddy, who had neither. Perhaps these pages may help to throw light on this enigma. Two things, at any rate, my apostolic experiment did for me: first, it gave me a measure of the fundamental difficulties which must be encountered by all who, under the conditions of modern life, try to establish religion on a basis of scientific conviction, as distinguished from supernatural Belief; secondly, it brought me into relation, direct or indirect, with most of Comte's principal disciples, throughout the world, who, in different ways, were engaged in a similar task.

The fruits of these experiences will be found in the following pages. Besides, however, giving some account of Positivist history for a period of seventy years, I have ventured to tell a more individual and intimate, but still, perhaps, representative story—the story of a seeker for "truth" who, at a time when there were many such seekers, moved out of the apparent calm and security of the Anglican Church into the perils and obscurity of a religious quest. In degree, I was compelled to tell this story by the very nature of my narrative. I had to show how I ceased to be a Christian and became a Positivist, and how, being still a Positivist, I was carried forward to certain conclusions which cannot

perhaps, be satisfactorily denoted by any merely sectarian name. In doing this I have been led to some mention, among other things, of nineteenth-century Secularism, with which I was brought into temporary relation. I have also given some account of my work in politics—which for me formed a part of religion—at a time when politicians were beginning to be occupied with a number of the greater questions, of peace and war, which are now vexing the soul of the world.

Lastly, to this tale of things sacred and profane, I have added a chapter of my experiences and impressions as a Positivist worshipper in the Roman Catholic Church, and of a few " Modernists " and " Old Catholics." The record of my life begins with the Crimean War, and ends with the " Great War." It was a mixed age, in things spiritual and temporal ; and perhaps in this respect my mixed story is no bad representation of it. In telling it, I hope I shall be forgiven if I sometimes abuse the chartered egoism of autobiography and—to end this Preface, as I began it, with excuses drawn from a great autobiographer—if I

> With the thing
> Contemplated, describe the Mind and Man
> Contemplating; and who, and what, he was—
> The transitory Being that beheld
> The vision.[1]

MALCOLM QUIN.

[1] Wordsworth, *The Recluse*.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE 9

CHAPTER I

DAYS OF BELIEF 19

Coltishall Village—Parentage—An Outburst of Protestantism—Catholicism and Dissent—Melton Mowbray—Melton Church—A Protestant Monument—Melton School—Removal to Leicester—Study and Reading—Music and the Theatre—Politics—Religion in Leicester—St. Matthew's Church—Bishop Magee—Early Belief.

CHAPTER II

FROM CHRISTIANITY TO POSITIVISM 30

Catholicism and Christianity—The Catholic Faith—The Simple Believer—Theology—The Supernatural—The Language of Theology—The Poetry of Belief—Anglicanism and Catholicism—The Coming of Unbelief—Choosing Christianity—The "Will to Believe"—The End of Belief—Processes of Unbelief—Belief and Rationality—Nineteenth-Century Oracles—Books of Belief—Mill and Comte—A Positivist Book—The Search for a Positive Religion—Freethinkers and Comte—A Vagrant Worshipper.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIENCES OF SECULARISM 43

Early Friendships—A Leicester Bookseller—A Secularist Friend—Secularism—Charles Bradlaugh—Leicester Secularism—George Jacob Holyoake—A Gentle Atheist—Holyoake and Newcastle—Impressions of Secularism—A Nineteenth-Century Scandal—Josiah Gimson—James Thomson—Lectures to Secularists—Destructive and Constructive Secularism—The *National Reformer*—Essays in Hymn-Writing—Mrs. Besant—The "Fruits of Philosophy"—Mrs. Besant's Hymn-Book—G. W. Foote—Bradlaugh in Debate—"Bible Eights" and "Liberal Eights"—Visits to Catholic Churches—A Leicestershire Monastery.

CHAPTER IV

NORTHERN SECULARISM. 60

Settlement in Newcastle—The Town and the County—Solitude in a City—The Mind of the Apostle—Newcastle Secularists—Orators of Secularism—Mending and Ending—

PAGE

Bradlaugh and Politics—Bradlaugh and Free Speech—Foote's Publications—Sir T. C. Martin—J. M. Robertson—Dr. Glasse—The *Freethinker* Cartoons—A Letter from Foote—Foote's Imprisonment—Foote, the Blasphemer.

CHAPTER V

THE EARLY HISTORY OF POSITIVISM 71

The Need for a Church—Positivist Divisions—Comte and Philosophy—The "Positive Philosophy"—Exclusion of Religion—Comte's Later Work—The Positive Religion—A New Religion—The New Church—The New Religion and the Old—Comte as Man and Thinker—Comte's Moral Life—Comte's "Conversion"—Comte's Later Changes—After Comte's Death—The Word "Positivist"—A "Director of Positivism"—Dissatisfaction and Schism—Dr. Congreve—A Positivist Priest—"Chapel Street" and "Newton Hall"—The English Positivist Committee—"Newton Hall" and Religion—Dr. Congreve and the Church—School and Church—The "Chapel Street" Worship—Congreve's Congregation—Prayer in Positivism—Comte and Prayer—A Nominal Priesthood—Congreve and His Associates—A House Divided—Ambiguities and Illusions.

CHAPTER VI

PREACHING POSITIVISM 93

Entry into Positivism—Doubts and Misgivings—A Letter from Dr. Congreve—Answer to Doubts—An Interview with Dr. Congreve—Congreve and Comte—Congreve's Personality—Preaching the Gospel—The Positivist Bible—First Meetings—A "Be-lectured City"—Leicester Positivism—Professor Patrick Geddes—The Sunderland "Free Associate Church"—Marriage—Ernest Rhys—Rev. Bernard Snell—Changing Fortunes.

CHAPTER VII

MY FIRST CHURCH 105

Women and Workmen—Lectures on Positivism—Worship and Doctrine—First Positivist Services—Congreve and Religious Continuity—Things Old and New in Religion—Our First Church—A Positivist Temple—Henry Crompton—Plunging into Prayer—Positivist Secessions—Canon Dixon—An Anglican Sonnet of Humanity—Lord Robson and Positivism—Frederic Harrison—Harrison and his Yellow Gloves—Professor Beesly.

CHAPTER VIII

POSITIVIST DEVELOPMENTS 117

A Time of Expansion—Liverpool Positivism—Dr. Carson—Hymns Theological and Rational—A Prophet of the Proletariat—A Positivist Communion Rite—Albert Crompton and his Wife—A Visit to Liverpool Positivists—South-American Positivism—Brazilian Positivists—The Papacy of Paris—Choice of the Priesthood—Training of Positivist Priests—

PAGE

Comte and his Priesthood—The Positivist Scriptures—A Symbolic Priesthood—Congreve and the Priesthood—The Positivist Trinity—The First "Church of Humanity"—Within the Sanctuary—Legends of "Chapel Street"—A Positivist Conference—C. Kegan Paul—Kegan Paul and Positivism—Positivist Congregations—A Positivist Ordination—A Vanished Positivist Priest—John Morley on Positivism—An Unpublished Article—A Renunciation of "Literature."

CHAPTER IX

MY SECOND CHURCH 138

Journalist and Apostle—Buying a Church—Christian and Positivist Churches—A Positivist Sacrament—Naming a Church—Falstaff and his Followers—The Futility of Miracles—Types of Anarchy—The Task of the Apostle—Prayer and God—Lectures and Worship—An Apostolic Stipend—Material Difficulties—Perils of a Positivist Apostle—The last of my Journalism.

CHAPTER X

SOME POSITIVIST EXPERIMENTS 149

The Sacrament of Maturity—Among Liverpool Positivists—The New Social Order—Development of the Worship—Hymns of Worship—An Office of Worship—A Positivist Altar—Our Side Altars—The Coming of the Surplice—Two Positivist Festivals—Administering Sacraments—The Positivist Marriage—Worship in Positivism—Comte's "First Philosophy"—Positivist Home Education—The Ideal and the Real in Education—Positivism and Domestic Service—Social Reunions—Political Tracts—The Author and his Books—The "Patriotic Union"—A Sunderland Mission Church—The Mother and Child—"Religion Without Theology."

CHAPTER XI

THE LATER POSITIVISM 167

Death of Dr. Congreve—The Protagonist of English Positivism—An Apostolic Letter—Three Irish Positivists—Dr. J. K. Ingram—Some Correspondents—The Boer War—The Boer Flags on the Altar—A Service for the Dead Boers—J. M. Robertson Again—The "West Hartlepool Church"—Comte and Submission—Submission and Secession—The Church and the Gospel—Annual Circulars—Annual Addresses—A Letter from Dean Kitchin—Another Removal—The Theatre and the Club.

CHAPTER XII

ORDER AND DISORDER 181

A Dependent Apostle—Order and Disorder—The Committee Principle—Aims of the Apostle—The Apostle and his Public—The Basis of Positivism—Principles and Practice—New Developments—Festival of the Virgin Mother—Comte and

PAGE

Christ—Comte and his Mistakes—A Christmas Service—A Protest from Dr. Ingram—A Letter of Rupture—Other Opinions.

CHAPTER XIII

POSITIVIZING CATHOLICISM 192

A Difference of Degree—the Logic of Development—The Eucharist in Catholicism—Comte's Utopia—Positivism and the Eucharist—Positivization—The Altar as Teacher—A Positivist Mass—The Responsibility of Initiative—Dissent and Secession—Positivism or Catholicism—"Aids to Worship"—Causes of Disagreement—Churches and Secessions—Stopping Subscriptions—Facing the Situation—Finis—Last Services—The Farewell.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 205

Selling a Church—A Fish out of Water—One of the Unemployed—Positivism in the Churches—An Anglican Ecclesiastic—Canon Osborne—Archbishop Mathew—Bishop Herford—Father Tyrell—The Meeting of Extremes—After Father Tyrell—Letter from a Modernist Priest—Churches of Anarchy—A Place for the Positivist Worshipper—"Once-ers" and "Twice-ers"—The Positivist in the Catholic Church—St. Dominic's, Newcastle—Congregational Singing—Low Masses and High—Freethinkers and Catholics—Priests and Preaching—Happiness in Fairyland—Symbols and Science—The Inventor of Cerebos Salt—"Catholicism and the Modern Mind"—Progress in Religion—A Visit to France—Things Positivist and Catholic—Baron von Hügel.

CHAPTER XV

LABOUR AND PEACE 224

The Labour Movement—The I.L.P.—At St. Dominic's—At a "Branch" Meeting—Religion and Labour—Labour and the Great War—War and Peace—Lord Morley on the War—Last Words from Morley—Two Books—Last Work in Newcastle—Farewell to Newcastle—A Talk with Ramsay MacDonald.

CHAPTER XVI

AFTER-THOUGHTS 232

Religion in the Modern World—The Meaning of Modernism—Comte and Modernism—The Future of Religion—Science and Religion—The Modern Mind and Comte—Positivist "Churches"—Forms of Failure—Positivist "Societies"—The World and Comte — Applied Sociology — Woman and Social Life — Positivism and Posterity—Religion and Perfection—Religion and Human Nature—Modernism and Perfection—Certainties and Uncertainties—The Future and the Past—The Place of Comte—Human Possibilities—Catholicism and Pessimism—Metaphysic and Life—Man and Law.

INDEX 247

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Malcolm Quin . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACE PAGE

2. Mrs. Besant in the 'Seventies 53

3. Dr. Richard Congreve 96

4. Frances Quin 102

Memoirs of a Positivist

CHAPTER I

DAYS OF BELIEF

About seven miles from Norwich there is a little village called Coltishall, situated on the river Bure. It was there that I was born, on February 6, 1854. As I left it, or was taken away from it, before I was two years old, and have never since seen it, I can, of course, give no account of it, except such as is derived from hearsay. It is, however, I understand, an agreeable little place, with the charm of woods and waters all about it. If I remember, or have been informed, rightly, at the time of my birth the vicar there was a cousin of Thackeray, and it was by him that I was baptized, and made, by my "sureties," to "renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve Him."

Coltishall Village.

My chief sureties, I suppose, were my father and mother. My father, James Quin, was a Protestant Irishman, who came over to England, I think, in the 'thirties of the nineteenth century to push his fortunes. He did not push them very far or very high. He was, according to the common view, respectably connected and well educated, but he contented himself with a position in the Inland Revenue service. In that service he continued all his life—gaining, if no other distinction, at least the distinction of a diligent and faithful State functionary. He was, however, a man of some literary interests, with what was then a rather exceptional knowledge of French, and a turn for writing verses. During

Parentage.

his life in London he associated a good deal with men of letters, and also with medical students—I think of the Bob Sawyer type. One story told of him was of how he plucked a tuft of hair from the skull of Jeremy Bentham as he was lying dead. That somewhat gruesome incident is not improbable. Bentham, as is well known, gave directions that when he died his body was to be dissected, and his instructions were carried out Among my father's personal friends was Laman Blanchard, the author, who, in Forster's *Life of Dickens*, is described as sitting next to Carlyle, listening, with his "keen look," to the great novelist's first private reading of *The Chimes*, in 1844.[1] Another of his friends was Thomas Miller, the Nottingham basket-maker, who became known, for a time, as the writer of a number of novels, mostly, I think, of the G. P. R. James school. Miller was the godfather of one of my brothers. I have of late years seen one or two of his books announced among cheap popular reprints. My mother, who was a Miss Gloag, was half-English and half-Scotch—the descendant of a small and obscure Highland clan, which still, perhaps, has representatives. She had no literary powers, but had at least some literary interests, or recollections. She used to gossip about them to us children.

An Outburst of Protestantism.

1854 was the year of the Crimean War—the first of our European wars since Waterloo; and I have heard my mother speak of how the income tax and the price of bread went up, and how difficult it then was to bring up an increasing family on limited means. Sixty years afterwards came a still more disastrous European war, and direr experiences of suffering and poverty. 1854 was also the year in which Pius IX signalized his policy of challenge to the modern mind by decreeing the new dogma of the Immaculate Conception. In that same year, too, Auguste Comte was busy shaping his "Religion of Humanity" in Paris, and five years afterwards was published the *Origin of Species*. Whether there was any discussion of such high matters

[1] Forster's *Life of Dickens*, "Fireside" edition, p. 377.

in our modest Norfolk household I do not know. In politics I believe my father and mother were both what used to be called Tories; in religion they were ordinary Anglicans, but, I should suppose, of the Evangelical, or Low Church, school rather than of the High. The Oxford Movement was then a still comparatively recent event. Manning joined the Catholic Church only three years before my birth. The resentment caused by the reconstitution of the hierarchy in England was then still fresh and keen. I think my father and mother must have had some sympathy with that resentment, for I inherited from them and still possess a large engraving belonging to that period which has an evident anti-Catholic stamp upon it. It represents "Princess Elizabeth examined by the Romish bishops touching her Protestant faith," and with her hand authoritatively resting on the Bible. *Ego et Biblia mea*, she seems to say. This was in 1554—exactly three hundred years before the time to which I am now going back.

Catholicism and Dissent.

In spite of their Protestant picture, however, I do not think my father and mother can have had any violent hostility to Catholicism. I certainly do not remember their ever saying anything against it. My impression is that they were rather indulgent towards it. The nature of my father's work carried him about, at intervals, from one place to another, and for some years, before our Coltishall days, he lived in Ireland. My mother appears to have come back from that country, as many English people have done, more Irish than the Irish, and she brought with her an Irish Catholic servant. One of my brothers, too, played the organ in a Catholic church—or "chapel," as the word then was—and I remember being taken, as a small boy, to a service there. If I was nourished in any religious prejudices, they were rather against "Dissenters" than against Roman Catholics. We have changed our ecclesiastical terminology since that time. There were then no "Free Churches" or Free Churchmen.

It was not until, in the course of our wanderings, we went to live in Melton Mowbray that I began to have

any definite and connected impressions of life and religion. Before that time our home, after we left Coltishall, was first in Norwich and afterwards in the trim little Suffolk town of Stowmarket. As regards Norwich, city of churches, I have only some dim and misty memories of the Cathedral. Stowmarket I doubtfully recall as the only place in my experience where the church possessed a clerk—a functionary as I perhaps inexactly remember him, whose chief duty was to sit under the pulpit, and say "Amen."

Melton Mowbray.

To Melton Mowbray we went when I was about six, and there we remained till I was twelve. As a town it is principally famous for fox-hunting and pork-pies, but its chief distinction and adornment is its imposing Early English church. It is, as ought to be, a liberal education to worship in it—even for a boy. To this church I was taken, Sunday after Sunday, for six years; and I am sure, young as I was, I was not too young to gain from it a sense of religion as at any rate a thing of beauty. It was not then, however, so noble—at least in its interior—as it has since become. The stamp of Protestantism still rested upon it. As I remember it, it was disfigured by ugly galleries, running round the walls, and had a double series of old-fashioned high "family pews, with white number-plates on the doors. In one of these we children used to sit snug with our parents, looking awfully up to the high pulpit, as the clergyman solemnly ascended it in his black gown. His disappearance into the vestry in his surplice, and reappearance in this vestment—a piece of Geneva ritual, as I suppose—was always an interesting moment for us. Since then, I presume, the black gown has gone—even from Melton church. Certainly the galleries and the old-fashioned pews have gone, together with the towering pulpit. The interior can now be seen in all its ancient and majestic proportions.

Melton Church.

In my time the vicar was Dr. Colles—a round-faced, loud-voiced Irishman, with spectacles. He was a sturdy and pronounced Protestant—and perhaps a good man and vicar all the same. When I last visited the church—

some twelve years ago—I found an elaborate sculptured memorial to him, in the form of a monument to the three "Protestant Martyrs"—Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley. I do not know, but I suppose there can be few English churches in which there is such a monument, erected at so comparatively late a date. But many things have been changed in Anglicanism since the early 'sixties. I cannot now remember exactly what our services were like when I used to go to Melton Church, but of course there was nothing remotely resembling "Anglo-Catholicism" about them. There was hymn-singing certainly, and there was an organ. I do not think there was any intoning, but none the less I still recall the poetic cadences of the Litany as they struck on my young ear in that beautiful building, and how interested I used to be in the mystic change from the pathetic refrain of "Good Lord, deliver us" to the not less pathetic "We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord." The Litany is one of the pieces of the Catholic liturgy which are a nobler thing in English than in Latin.

A Protestant Monument.

Another thing that Melton Mowbray did for me, was to give me some beginnings in education. The chief school in the town was, I suppose, the Church School. At any rate I was sent to it, and remained at it for six years. It must, I think, have been an unusually good school of its kind, and of the age before the Education Act of 1870. This may have been partly owing to the character of the man who was head master during most of my time. He was a good Yorkshireman named Kitson. He must have had some interests other than those which were strictly "elementary." I remember his coming down to school one day, and telling us boys that a great man had just died. This "great man" was Cardinal Wiseman. An English cardinal was in those days a new and distinctive phenomenon. On another occasion he made an impression on us—or he made an impression on one of us—by reading to us Hood's "Song of the Shirt." I can still recall the effect of its "stitch, stitch, stitch" on my young mind. After I had left the school, and Melton Mow-

Melton School.

bray, Kitson lent me Macaulay's History, which also was an awakening piece of literature for me. I feel sure he can have been no ordinary man, or master.

Removal to Leicester.

However, the time came, and came all too soon, when I had to say good-bye to Melton church and school. At the end of 1865 my father—who had retired from his work—died somewhat suddenly; and my mother, who had then to be both father and mother to us younger children, removed to Leicester, some fifteen miles away, in the hope of finding employment for her boys. I was then only twelve years old—too young, according to our present way of looking at things, to turn my back on school life, and begin the life of making a living. In those days, however, it was not so easy as it is now for even a thoughtful and studious boy without means to make his way to the higher places of education. A position was therefore found for me in the offices of an important commercial establishment, which had its branches in Leicester and a number of other large towns. I am afraid my work was never very congenial to me, for I must plead guilty to not having had a business mind; but as I continued in it—in Leicester or elsewhere—for some sixteen years, I suppose I must have acquitted myself at least respectably in such functions as I discharged.

Study and Reading.

What was more important—or what then seemed to me more important—was that my work imposed no great physical or mental strain on me, and left me with a good deal of freedom for study and reading. My old master, Kitson, had also come to live in Leicester, and he gave me some help and encouragement. After his death, I wrote for advice and direction to another of our former Melton masters, a man named Hall, who soon afterwards took orders and became head master of some secondary school. I still have his answering letter of counsel in which he traced out for me—on the supposition, as he said, that I wanted "learning for learning's sake"—a pretty ambitious and complete course of study in classics, modern languages, general literature and science. It was, in my circumstances at the time, a piece of good fortune to receive such guidance,

and I think I made a fairly steady attempt in succeeding years to fulfil the programme which he put before me. They were at any rate years of work and reading; and as in Leicester I had access to good libraries, I had a sufficient command of books. According to Carlyle, a collection of books is the proper university for our modern world, and Dr. Johnson said he would put a boy into a library and let him range for himself. There may be wisdom or unwisdom in these views, but certainly, in those reading years, I ranged for myself, and ranged pretty widely. However—owing largely, perhaps, to my friend Hall's good counsels—in the "mighty maze" I was not "quite without a plan." Fortunately, too, in the vast field of culture—"Knowing the best that has been thought and said in the world," as it was at that very time defined by Matthew Arnold—one great mind commonly leads us to others. Eventually I was lucky enough to be led to Comte, who had a more universal mind than any university—a university, indeed, not pretending to be an organ of universality, either by its name or its nature.

Music and the Theatre.

Books, however, were not the only means of education which were open to a young student in such a town as Leicester at that period. It was open to him also—either in Leicester itself, or in London, which was only some two hours' distant—to come under the influence of good music, good plays and good pictures. It was not till a later time that it was possible for me to hear the Wagner operas and the Hallé and Richter orchestras—experiences which surely more than anything else breed in us a sense of human intellectual greatness—but Patti, Sims Reeves and Santley were then in their prime, and Ellen Terry and Irving were entering on their great beginnings. We who have heard and seen such things may feel that we have lived, in spite of all the gibes of the twentieth century against the "Victorians."

Politics.

Another dominating interest of my mind—at that time and ever afterwards—was politics. Leicester was a political town. It was a stronghold of Radicalism—of a Radicalism so pronounced and deep-rooted that it was then considered almost useless for any

one but a Liberal to contest the seat. I cannot remember whether in those early days I was a "Tory" or a "Liberal"—most probably at first a Tory, for as I have said, I was brought up in a Tory household, and heard Tory talk. In any case I was a keen politician, and was occupied with the newspapers at a time when it would have been more natural, and perhaps better, for so young a boy to be playing cricket or football. I remember the absorbing interest with which, when I was fifteen, I read all the debates on the Irish Church Bill, and followed the heroic encounters between Gladstone and Disraeli. I am afraid I was guilty—if it was guilt—of admiring Disraeli the most; and this was true even after I ceased to be a Tory, and became what, for want of a better name, I must call a Radical. I admired his genius, his wit, his imagination, his courage. Another important political event of that time was the Franco-Prussian War, and I well recall the eagerness with which we all, young and old, went out from time to time to scan the bulletins of the battles. We could not foresee then that, almost half a century afterwards, some of us would be looking on at a still bloodier conflict of which the war of 1870 was one of the seeds.

Religion in Leicester.

But in that first time in Leicester, as always, my deepest interest of all was religion. Leicester, which was a Radical town, was also a Nonconformist town—the "capital of Dissent" it was sometimes called. Of Dissent in those days I knew nothing. In Leicester, as before in Melton Mowbray, I went with my mother to church. Our first church, I think, was St. George's. It has suffered from a great fire, I believe, since that time, and the interior has been entirely transformed; but it was then, like our Melton church, a church of galleries and pews, with a high pulpit. There also the clergyman donned a black gown before preaching. One Sunday, however, we got a shock, for a bold new curate appeared upon the scene—a Mr. Burnaby, cousin of the Captain Burnaby who once made a stir by writing a book about his "Ride to Khiva"—and he mounted the pulpit in his surplice. It was the symbolic beginning of greater changes. This

ancient conflict between black and white no longer, it may be presumed, plays a part in Anglicanism.

St. Matthew's Church.

We did not, however, remain long at St. George's. Leicester at that time was beginning to shake off what I think must formerly have been the predominance of Evangelicalism. Two of its churches I remember as emphatically and persistently "Low"—Trinity Church and Christ Church. I have been told, rightly or wrongly, that they have remained obstinately and severely Low to this day. But about this period some new churches were erected, and the services there were of a different type. One of these was St. Matthew's. It was situated, as I remember, in a slum district, but its daring ritualism—or what in those days was counted daring—attracted people of various classes, and from different parts of the town. Among these was my mother. I have called her a "Protestant," but her Protestantism must have been of the tolerant and uncritical kind, not fortified with theological arguments. At any rate, she now went regularly to St. Matthew's, and took us children with her. To me personally the change from black gowns to surplices, and from a service chiefly said to a service chiefly sung was an agreeable one. I became a "High Churchman," according to the standard of that time. It was, of course, a low standard of the High, but we had a bright and ornate service, a choir duly arrayed in cassocks and surplices, and active ritualistic clergy—we did not then call them priests or "fathers"—who preached to us that we ought to bring beauty into the worship of God. I remember we all gazed with wonder at a brave and singular young man who startled us by bowing to the Communion table.

Bishop Magee.

So long as I remained a church-goer, St. Matthew's was my chief Leicester church. There were others, however, which occasionally attracted us. One of them was St. Martin's—now, I believe, the Leicester Cathedral—where we sometimes went to hear a Broad Churchman named Vaughan, a cousin, I think, of one of the translators of Plato's *Republic*. Another was

St. Margaret's—moderately "High" I think it was—where I heard the Rev. A. H. Mackonackie, famous for his ritualism and his pathetic death; a third—but this was at a somewhat later date—was St. Paul's. It was then easily the Highest of the High Leicester churches, and I believe has kept its character to the present day. The great awakening voice in Leicester Anglicanism at that time, however, was that of Dr. Magee, whom Disraeli in his first short premiership, made Bishop of Peterborough. We ran about to hear him preach and speak whenever we could. He was an orator and a wit, and he sometimes said honest and outright things which got him into trouble with the godly—as when he declared that it was impossible to put the Sermon on the Mount into practice. On another occasion he declared that he "preferred England free to England sober." This paradox, of course, was perfectly good Christianity, since God—according to our common theology—is not only not a prohibitionist, but suffers people to be tempted, and even allows the Devil to go about tempting them. Christians, however—or at any rate Protestant Christians—do not always understand their own doctrines. They miss the significance of Eden.

Early Belief.

In the early days to which I am now going back, however, such problems and puzzles as these did not vex me. They were days of Belief—days of undisturbed religious happiness. I have met men, and read of others, who associated nothing but gloom and horror with the faith of their childhood. It appears to have bred in them only a sense of fear and awful restraint. It was a burden which they bore with aversion, and threw off with gladness. With me it was not so. Ours, as I have said, was a household of easy-going Anglicanism. We had no black Calvinism to frighten us. Hell and damnation were not thrust at our young souls. We had no marked sense of sin. Bible-reading was not made a punishment to us. We were not afflicted with pious talk. Our religion consisted principally of church-going, and church-going—for me at least—was never unpleasant. It was, in fact, agreeable—and this most of all when I

became a youthful "High Churchman," and worship was transformed into a poem of Heaven. To this day the sound of the church bells—or even the monotonous clang of a single bell—ringing for service stirs in me sensibilities which I am not in the least sorry to possess. If, therefore, I left the life of Belief behind me and passed into "Unbelief," this was not at all because Belief was a dismal tyranny and Unbelief the joy of freedom. We must look for other explanations of these things.

CHAPTER II

FROM CHRISTIANITY TO POSITIVISM

WHEN we propose to ourselves to give some account of the way in which an individual mind, our own or any other, passed from the state of Christian Belief to the state of what we commonly designate "Unbelief," it is incumbent upon us, in the first place—especially in this age of increasing religious disagreement and confusion—to make clear the sense in which we employ the word Belief itself. Christianity, as a historic and dogmatic system, is most completely—although, of course, not exclusively—represented by Catholicism, understanding by Catholicism the doctrines, worship and organization of the Roman Catholic Church. I shall, therefore, in this chapter, use the word Catholicism, so understood, as comprehensive of all Christianity, apart from a merely privative Protestant sectarianism.

Catholicism and Christianity.

The Belief on which Catholicism is founded is what we are accustomed to call "supernatural" belief. It is a belief in supernatural beings—God and the Devil; in supernatural places—Heaven, Hell and Purgatory; in a supernatural Man, or God-man—Christ; in a supernatural entity—the indestructible human soul, which enters at death into Purgatory, Heaven or Hell; in a supernatural and errorless Book—the Bible; in a supernatural and errorless Church—a Church which is dependent, for its supernatural and infallible authority, on the assumption that it is specifically and continuously guided by God; and in a supernatural conception of sin, as an offence against God, which calls for expiation, and, if it is not expiated and forgiven, entails eternal punishment. This Christian Belief is a whole. Its articles are intercon-

The Catholic Faith.

nected and interdependent. We cannot believe, or reject, any one of them, without believing or rejecting all the others, as they are held and taught by the Catholic Church. Most of all does that apply to the claim of that Church to be a divinely inspired and directed teaching body, relatively to the supernatural. The state of Belief for the individual mind is one in which all these articles are received as a unity, without doubt or question, on the authority of that Church, as finally represented by a governing and deciding Head.

The Simple Believer.

This state of Belief, however, is found in two distinct forms, although both of them commonly co-exist in the same mind. One of these two forms may be called the poetic, or symbolic; the other is the argumentative, or theological. Belief, according to the poetic form, is belief as it exists in the mind of an ordinary believer—a child or an uninstructed person. Such a believer conceives God, for example, much as He is represented in an illustrated Missal, where the Trinity is pictured as two seated masculine figures, bearded, clothed and crowned, with a Dove hovering between them. In such a conception of Him, the Image of God is the image of a typical human being, with the signs of sex and age resting upon him. In the mind of the ordinary uneducated believer such an image, of course, is not consciously and artificially formed in its completeness, any more than it is criticized or analysed; but he is at least accustomed to picture God as a man, or as a "He," and "Father," rather than as a woman, or a "She," and Mother, and to speak of the voice of God, the eye of God, the hand of God, and the throne of God, as he would speak in reference to an earthly ruler. In the same way, in so far as he has any image in his mind of the Devil, or of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory, it is an image spontaneously constructed out of his experiences of the natural and the human.

Theology.

To the instructed theologian, of course, these images of supernatural beings and places are types and figures. He calls the picture of the Trinity in the Missal a symbol. He says that to arrive at a right conception of God we must strip this picture, one after

the other, of all its visible features, and recognize that it stands for "something" invisible and inconceivable—a "Spirit" without form, physical organs, sex or age, which does not exist "anywhere" but "everywhere," which never "began," and can never "end," and which is yet somehow a "Person," capable of "knowing" and "doing" all things, while without the brain and body which, in all human experience, are associated with knowledge and action.

The Supernatural.

The difference between the God of the simple believer and the God of the believer who is a theologian is that the former is, in some degree, a positive and poetic human image, capable of inspiring love, awe, fear, hope and worship, while the latter, standing alone, is a shapeless and colourless negative abstraction. To the theologian, considered strictly as such, the "supernatural" is simply the non-natural and the non-human. To reach God, he holds, we must first—at least in the mind—escape from the "infinite" universe and Humanity. According to him, all the images which we shape in order to picture the Divinity to ourselves, and all the terms which we employ to denote it—the terms of sex and paternity, for example—are anthropomorphic and symbolic. They are artifices which we consciously employ knowing them to be artifices. The same thing applies to supernatural "places." The Catholic Church, for instance, grants indulgences of so many "days" and "weeks," but is careful to point out, all the same, that these terms of time have, in reference to Purgatory, no such meaning as we are accustomed to give to them. They have, in fact, no meaning at all, since human language—whether in reference to nature or man—has necessarily no meaning apart from the conditions and experiences out of which it has sprung.

The Language of Theology.

It is, or it ought to be, obvious, that this is also true of the Christian conception of God, and of the language which theologians employ concerning it. God, for instance, is said to be the "Supreme Being." Now, a being is something that exists, and existence—in relation to a living being—is a human term used to denote a complex of continuous and reciprocal

relations between an organism and its environment. Apart from such a conception of it and such relations, it has no meaning. A living " being," which has no organic character and no environment, is not even a contradiction in terms; it is simply an unthinkable negation. Nevertheless, the argumentative theologian applies this word " being " to the inconceivable " something " which he denotes by the word " God," just as the Church applies the words " days " and " weeks " to the inconceivable " somewhere " which it calls Purgatory, even while recognizing and declaring that such time-terms have no measurable significance there. What is true of the word " being " as applied to God, is also evidently true of the various attributes ascribed to Him—love, wisdom, anger, justice, will, and power. These words are words of nature and Humanity. If they are used in reference to " something " which, by the hypothesis, is non-natural and non-human—a " something," therefore, which is no " thing," or nothing—they as certainly cease to have a meaning as do terms of time when applied to a " region " which is destitute of all the relations from which our ideas of time are derived.

The Poetry of Belief.

According to the argumentative theologian, therefore, the whole of the supernatural resolves itself ultimately into a vast and inconceivable negation—an illimitable Nobody and Nowhere—into which we carry the conceptions and language of nature and Humanity, knowing that when so carried they are meaningless. But the simple believer is not a metaphysician, or dialectician. He has the imagination of a poet. To him the supernatural is a magic realm, and God the chief magician. He is, too, a Father whom he can love, and a judge whom he must fear—a fountain of mercies, a dreadful, all-seeing eye, a " helper " in trouble, a rewarder and avenger, who, at the " Last Day," will raise the good or penitent to an endless Paradise, and send the wicked down to an endless Hell. Most of all, of course, is this humanity of God made manifest in Christ—the bridge between the fathomless negativism of the supernatural argument, and the positivism of the supernatural poem—

for in Christ God becomes incarnate, as a God-man, and is revealed to the senses as a teacher, healer and voluntary victim, saving men, by the sacrifice of Himself, from death and damnation, offering them His body and blood as a perpetual presence and nourishment, and leaving them His Spirit in His Church to guide them. As it is hardly necessary to say, it is this simple belief of the ordinary believer, natural and human—and not the blank negations of the theologian—which has given life and beauty to Catholicism. All that the theologian has done for it—an indispensable and important office certainly—has been to invest it with argumentative sanction, fixity and coherence, converting the Poem, or Myth, into a Faith.

Anglicanism in Catholicism.

Seventy years ago, a boy born, as I was, in the Church of England, was born into as much of the Belief of Catholicism as that Church had retained at the Reformation, and still officially professed to acknowledge. I was a boy-believer, receiving my Faith from others, as I received my food and clothes. As such, of course, I was a part of the great mass of "simple believers." I was not a theologian. It was the positive and human poem of Christianity, not its metaphysical negations, that stamped itself on my mind. My Belief, like the Belief of all ordinary believers—the young and the old, the capable and the incapable, the ignorant and the educated, the good and the bad—found its chief expression in public worship. I went to church willingly and gladly—especially in my "High Church" time. I liked the organ music, the hymn-singing, the intoning of the prayers, the reading of the lessons, the processions, the choir in its cassocks and surplices, the ceremonies at the altar, the look of the church with the sun streaming through the pictured windows. I liked even the sermons. I questioned nothing. I did not, in my own mind, inquire why it was that "God"—the wonderful, unseen potentate, whom I pictured to myself as throned sublimely above the sky—was pleased with all this chanting, praying and playing. I accepted it without doubt or misgiving, contentedly and happily. That is the state of Belief.

This state of Belief eventually passed away—in my case, as in the case of millions of others. I cannot now—after an interval of fifty years—recall the exact times and stages of the great change. About some things connected with it, however, I am certain. I know, for example, that it was not in the least due, and could not be due, to the influence of "unbelieving" companions, or books of Unbelief. At the time to which I am now going back, I had no companions at all. I was a somewhat lonely boy, apart from the members of my own family, who were all, if not seriously religious, at least "orthodox" and conventional "church-goers." Some of them might be slack and negligent in their Christianity, as multitudes of Christians are, but they were not critical of it. I had, in fact, no unbelieving companions until I myself became an "Unbeliever," Then I naturally looked about for them. In the same way, although I was certainly a reading boy, I read no books directed against Christianity until Christianity, as a Belief, had passed from my mind. I read the historians, of course, and the poets—as, for example, Byron, Shelley and Keats—and in some of the historians and poets there are certainly things which may be said to be solvents of Belief. But there are also things which make for Belief. Besides Byron and Shelley, among moderns, I read Wordsworth and Tennyson, and I was then, as ever afterwards, a lover of Dante and Milton. In fiction, Scott, Dickens and Thackeray cannot be counted among "Unbelievers," and they were my prime favourites. George Eliot, whom I also loved, was a Positivist, but I did not then know this; and her books are far from encouraging a sceptical temper.

The Coming of Unbelief.

Therefore, neither men nor books made me an Unbeliever, and, as I have said, I did not dislike my Belief; I loved it. To this day—if it is not a hopelessly old-fashioned thing to say—I can see nothing to "object to" in Catholicism, or Christianity, either as a doctrine, or as a poem. On the whole, I should much prefer it to be "true," although sometimes, perhaps—if I could be born again, and "suckled in a creed outworn"

Choosing Christianity.

—I should choose rather to be carried back to the sunny fulness of Greek Paganism than to the dark mysteries of Christian mythology. But Christianity is good enough to be chosen, if we had any power of choice in the matter. It offers us at least the sublime adventure of an after-life; and although it is impossible for us—apart from the poetic images of supernaturalism—to form the least conception of such a life, most of us, I dare say, would be glad to accept a blank cheque upon eternity, and to trust to luck for the rest. We should prefer—if preference were of any use—Rabelais' "Great Perhaps" to a certain personal annihilation.

The "Will to Believe."

This, at least, I am sure, is how I felt fifty, or fifty-five, years ago. There is now a good deal of superfluous metaphysic talked and written about the "will to believe." If the will to believe means anything, it means the wish that certain specific statements concerning man and the universe were intelligibly and demonstrably true—as, for example, the statements of Roman Catholic orthodoxy. Personally, let me repeat, I was never without the will to believe these particular statements, and am not without it now. If I am, as I suppose I am, an "Unbeliever," and a "Positivist," this is not in the least because I think Positivism an absolutely "better" thing than Christianity, but because the "will to believe" can no more make me a Christian than it can make me an adherent of Greek Paganism, which often attracts me, as it attracted Wordsworth and Keats. A sane man ceases to wish for things which, according to all tested experience, he sees to be not impossible merely, but unthinkable.

The End of Belief.

My "Unbelief," when it came, then, was not caused by unbelieving companionship, nor by reading, nor by a "will to disbelieve." To the best of my remembrance, it was reluctant and hesitating, and I am so far from having ever regarded the Christian poem of the supernatural with hostility that, as will be seen, it has, in a sense, haunted and influenced me all my life. Nevertheless, the change came. In 1868, or 1870—when I was fourteen, or sixteen—I was what I have called a Believer. The Christian poem was then intact for

me. Five years afterwards, however—in 1873—I was an "Unbeliever." I know this because I happen still to possess some fragments of a rough diary which I then kept, and which shows that by that time I had ceased to hold any form of supernatural, or theological, Belief. In some five years, therefore, the whole of historic and dogmatic Christianity had passed completely from my mind. Comte, who was brought up a Catholic, and a monarchist, tells us that when he was fourteen he had become an Unbeliever and a Republican. I was not quite so precocious as my master, but I was still, I suppose, precocious enough. The change, however—considered in its negative aspects, was final and irreversible. The Belief which I then left behind me I have never recovered. It is more impossible for me to accept it now than it has ever been.

Processes of Unbelief.

I cannot, after so many years, give an analytic account of the mental processes by which this change was brought about. "Unbelief" comes to one mind in one way, to another mind in a different way. The common ground or cause of Unbelief, I suppose, is the fact that there is nothing in the life of the modern world to support Belief—meaning here by Belief Catholicism or Christianity. It is a thing of the Ancient World, or the Mediæval. It is now palpably out of relation with all the things we know and have to do. Our natural and human atmosphere is against it. So long as we do not actively question it, it, perhaps, persists—if only as a formal and conventional thing—but when the mind once begins to reflect upon it, and analyse it, it crumbles to pieces and vanishes, as the belief in fairies and witches vanishes—even without a process of conscious rejection—in the development of an ordinary sane mind.

Belief and Rationality.

Some of the definite difficulties, or arguments, which I know to have disturbed many who have ended by a rejection of Belief did not at all weigh with me—as, for example, the problem of the six days' creation, or the story of the Ark, or the Virgin-birth of Christ, or His Miracles and Resurrection, or the puzzle of the Trinity, or the Bible as a flawless Revelation.

I find it even now not easy to enter into the state of mind of those who profess to believe in an omnipotent and omniscient personal God, capable of "creating" the infinite universe out of "nothing," and then boggle at a number of smaller difficulties such as arise out of the "higher criticism," or geology, or Darwinism. I find it, in the same way, difficult to sympathize with those who hold that to accept Roman Catholicism is "irrational," while to accept some irreducible minimum of theological "Modernism," or Unitarianism, is somehow intellectual and "rational." To me Catholicism has the relative and historic rationality of its own age, just as science represents the developed rationality of the modern world. I can see no rationality at all in a Protestant sect or metaphysical school claiming to be an authority on the "supernatural"—of which it knows absolutely nothing and can prove nothing—while denying the supernatural authority of the Roman Catholic Church. With me it was all or none. When I ceased to be an Anglican and could not become a Roman Catholic, it was not long before the whole structure of my boyish faith fell to pieces in my mind. We believe with Rome; we argue with metaphysic; we know with science—even when we know nothing more than our own ignorance. Forms of mere theological or metaphysical hypothesis have for me no more intelligibility or rationality than the bold formulas of the Nicene or Athanasian Creed; and they are much less poetic and inspiring.

Thus it happened. When, however, I became what I have had to call an "Unbeliever," I did not cease to be occupied with religion. On the contrary, I was, in a sense, more occupied with it than ever. I had, as I have said, not been consciously helped to my Unbelief by arguments against Christianity, but I now became acquainted with a number of writers who, if they were not, in a direct and formal sense, anti-Christian, were at least non-Christian. They were the greater oracles of the nineteenth century. Among these, my principal hero, for a time, was Carlyle. In the state of mind in which I was left when I ceased to be an Anglican

Nineteenth-Century Oracles.

Believer, *Sartor Resartus* was the book for me, for it was the book of a man of profound moral genius and spiritual imagination who had wrestled forlornly with the problem of the universe, and who seemed to hold out a helping hand to his fellow-wrestlers. Carlyle was never indifferent to the great things of Humanity. He was, in this respect, of the same essential temper as St. Augustine, Pascal or Newman. With him, among the chief influences of my mind at this period, I must rank Emerson, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, George Henry Lewes and Matthew Arnold. In common, too, with other thinking youngsters of that time, I was a reader of such contemporary essayists as Huxley, Tyndall, Clifford, John Morley and Frederic Harrison, while George Eliot—when I began to recognize the distinctive significance of her work—deepened her hold on me. How do these gods of the nineteenth century stand in the twentieth? Are we worshipping at higher shrines?

Books of Belief.

But my continued interest in religion—"interest," indeed, being too weak a word to represent what was really a master-motive—did not merely carry me to these lords of literature and speculation. When I ceased to be a Christian I became a constant, and I think I may even say a devout, reader of the Christian classics. The Bible was then more a book for me than it had ever been before. I was a lover of Bunyan, as I still am. The *Imitation* became, and remained, a poem of the soul for me. I had never read it until I became an "Unbeliever," but then I began to read it, and went on reading it for many years. Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying* was another of my "unbelieving" books. I do not know whether any one reads it now. When I became a sort of public "Freethinker," and—as I shall presently show—took to giving lectures to Freethinkers, among my earliest subjects were the Bible, as interpreted by Matthew Arnold—the *Imitation* and Jeremy Taylor.

I have mentioned Mill and George Henry Lewes. Among other things that they did for me, they brought me into relation with Comte. Mill's *Auguste Comte and Positivism* was, as it happened, the first philosophical work which I

ever read. At the time I was not quite prepared for it, but it nevertheless left a lasting impression upon my mind.

Mill and Comte.

Mill, of course, although a disciple of Comte—and even, in a sense, an adherent of the "Religion of Humanity"—was a critic of his master. Speaking of Comte's scheme of social and ecclesiastical organization, he said to my old friend and teacher, Dr. Congreve: "I wished it to fail, and so I used ridicule against it, as the most powerful instrument known to me." I remember, too, that in his *Auguste Comte and Positivism* he refers to Comte's later work as exhibiting the "melancholy decadence of a great intellect."

After all, however, my best introduction to Comte was not by Mill or Lewes, but by Comte himself. Prowling about one day in a Leicester book-shop, I came across the volume which has been translated into English as the *General View of Positivism*. Frederic Harrison has said somewhere that it was the last book to be read, or re-read, by George Eliot, before her death. Comte—as one of his original disciples told me—attached such importance to it that he thought he would have died of despair if he had been unable to publish it. This, I suppose, was because it was the first open expression of his religious philosophy, which had then become the supreme interest of his life. The *General View* is certainly an eloquent and moving piece of work. It is the work of a scientific thinker who was also a master of imagination and vision. When I first read it, I did not wholly agree with it, or admire it, and I do not wholly agree with it, or admire it, now. None the less, it was the book that I then needed. It laid the foundations of my conscious and avowed Positivism, of which it is no boast to say that I got it not from any of Comte's expounders or disciples, but from Comte himself.

A Positivist Book.

What Comte became to me will be better understood as I proceed. Here I may say simply that I became his disciple because there was a natural congruity of development and aim, between his mind, which was a great one, and mine, which was one of a large number of ordinary

minds then moving out of Christian theology in a quest for something which we are agreed to call "truth." I had become an "Unbeliever," but I nevertheless wanted a "religion." The word religion has been said to be the most difficult of terms to exactly and completely define. There have, in fact, been many definitions of it. I cannot suppose that I had any right "definition" of it, or systematic conception of it, at the time to which I am now going back. But I was not satisfied simply to dismiss my Christianity from my mind—its poem, its argument, its ethics—and leave it behind. I was not satisfied, either to see life—man in the universe—in unrelated sections, as it is commonly seen by the mere *littérateur*, the scientific specialist or the politician. It seemed to me —as it is held in the human mind—to be a whole, and I wanted to see it as a whole. Christianity, of course, is not a real synthesis, but it is a sort of substitute for a synthesis. It sums up all things in the one poetic and symbolic conception, "God." The creation—the world and Humanity —is contained in its Creator. The Unbeliever, merely as an Unbeliever, is left without such a unifying conception. His integer has been broken up into disordered fractions.

The Search for a Positive Religion.

Comte's appeal to me may be easily explained. He presented himself to me as a master of synthesis, and of a synthesis which was an ordered unity of imagination, worship, doctrine, morals and life. In this he stood alone. He was then, and he is now, the one thinker of the modern world professing to offer men a religion—a religion of love, poetry and service—founded on science. He attracted me for the simple reason that he gave me what I wanted, and what nobody else gave me. We may, of course, not want such a synthesis as Comte's. We may have no will to accept it, any more than we have a "will to believe" certain theological statements. I have, in the course of my life, met a large number of "Freethinkers" or Agnostics, who did not feel the slightest need for religion in any conception of it, supernatural or natural. The "Unbelievers" who are conscious of such a need are, in fact, the negligible few.

Freethinkers and Comte.

I, however, happened to be one of them. The others—the pure bloods of Unbelief—may be "right," and I may be "wrong." It is not much use for any individual mind, so long as it remains only an individual mind, to formulate canons of right and wrong in these or other matters. This chapter is merely the story of how I ceased to be an Anglican Christian and passed through Unbelief to religious Positivism.

A Vagrant Worshipper.

But I did not become an avowed Positivist at a bound. There were things which I missed in Comte and things which I disliked in him, and—so far as some of them are concerned—the things which I missed and disliked in him then I miss and dislike in him now. It took me, perhaps, as long a time to develop into a Positivist, in any complete and final sense, as it had taken me to leave my Christianity behind; and before I reached the port I had to venture on some uncertain seas. In the meantime I went on reading my Christian books—as well as some that were non-Christian. I even continued my attendance at Christian churches—as, in fact, I have done more or less all my life. I do not know whether it ought to be counted to me for righteousness, or whether it is only a proof of "invincible ignorance"; but I have, at one time or another, been present at the services of Jews, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Primitive Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers, the Catholic Apostolic Church, the Salvation Army, the Plymouth Brethren, the Mormons, the Christian Scientists and the Unitarians. I have also devoted a good deal of attention to Spiritualism, attending its séances, and reading its literature. It is doubtless a melancholy confession to make, but I am even now happier in a church of any kind than in a lecture-room, or a political meeting, and this in spite of the fact that I may disagree with what I hear in the church, and agree with what I hear in the other places.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIENCES OF SECULARISM

My "Freethinking," or "Unbelief," or "Agnosticism," or "Rationalism," or "Atheism," or "Infidelity," or whatever may be the right name among many names for the state of mind in religion which I have just described—this, as I have explained, was not due, as such a state of mind may sometimes be, to the disturbing influence of friends. If I did not "think for myself," I at least thought by myself. Sometime, however, in these same 'seventies which were so critical a period for me, I began to form intellectual friendships and acquaintances, and naturally they were, for the most part, among men whose tendencies and points of view were more or less congenial with my own.

Early Friendships.

Leicester is an ancient town which has grown into a modern one—or has had a modern one patched on to it—without any great regularity or harmony. In my time, High Street was a somewhat higgledy-piggledy, busy thoroughfare, in which the old and the new, lofty buildings and low, were mingled in a mediocre and ungraceful confusion, and in which shopkeepers still often lived above their shops. Among these shops was a bookseller's to which I used to pay frequent visits, buying when I could, and looking when I could not buy. It was kept by a man named Findley. He has long been dead, and his shop was many years ago pulled to the ground. It was at that time, however, a well-known and attractive spot for Leicester students and readers. Findley himself not only bought and sold books, but read them. He was a link with an earlier age, for he was one of the old Chartists. He was such a figure, in fact, as Charles

A Leicester Bookseller

Kingsley has depicted in *Alton Locke*—sturdy, independent, honest and uncompromising. He was—if I am to use the word again—a Freethinker, both in religion and politics; and men of very various opinions, when they went to do business with him, liked also, whether they agreed with him or not, to exchange ideas with him. He was an uncommon man among those whom we are accustomed to call the common people. I wonder how many persons there are now in Leicester who remember him.

A Secularist Friend.

Next to this bookseller's shop was another—connected with it, and indeed forming part of it. This was kept by a son of Findley's, named George, who was a dealer in music. With him I struck up a friendship which lasted as long as he did. It was not without its influence on us both—and on some others. He was a rather forlorn-looking figure—small, timid, modest, and an accident in childhood had injured his face, giving him not a repulsive, but certainly a damaged and pathetic appearance. He had, however, a spark of the divine human spirit in him, and was one of a number of men whom I have known who, weighed down by ill-health and evil circumstances, and possessed of no great culture or distinguished capacity, have followed after the things of good report, and refused to be immersed in sordid interests. He had the distinction—not so common in those days as it has since become—of having been brought up without any religion. He had, however, at least Abou Ben Adhem's religion—of love for his fellow men. Certainly I could not tell the story of my own religious life without paying my tribute to this obscure little Leicester shopkeeper who, fifty years ago, gave me the good of his friendship. Among other things, I owe to him my wife, for it was at the house of a married sister of his that I first met her.

Secularism.

It was Findley, too, who first brought me into relation with the Secularist movement. I do not know how much or how little life there still is in that movement. It was a thing of the Victorian age, and perhaps has long since lost such power and distinction as it then possessed. At the time to which I am now

going back, however, Secularism was a living and active force. It had its founder—George Jacob Holyoake, who was also one of the prophets of Co-operation. It had its leaders and apostles. It had its newspapers. It had its organization, with centres throughout England. It had—surest sign of vitality, according to some—its sects and its internal disputes. I suppose if there is not so much formal Secularism now as then, it is largely because the work which it principally aimed at doing has been done—by itself or by other agencies. Certainly it would not at present be so easy as it once was to draw a popular crowd together to hear a man abuse the Bible. That, however, is not because the Bible has now more believers, but, on the contrary, because there are more people who, on grounds good or bad, have ceased to be interested in it.

Charles Bradlaugh.

In the 'seventies of the last century, however, all this was different. Secularism, as a distinct and organized movement, seemed to be a rising tide. Its principal protagonist was Bradlaugh. I shall have more to say of him in a later page, but when I first began to know about Secularism he was only a distant voice to me, with an awful reputation for saying blasphemous things. A few years before this, he had made the first of his successive appearances as Parliamentary candidate for Northampton ; and one of the charges brought against him was that, on one such occasion, taking out his watch, he had said, "if there is a God, I will give him five minutes to strike me dead." The story was, of course, false and unfounded, and was often disproved. It was, however, good enough for ecclesiastics and political opponents to circulate, and so it was often repeated. I believe that some of us young people who were interested in religion and religious controversies for a long time held it to be a true story. It gave us a thrill, and made us, perhaps, anxious to see and hear the man who had escaped from such an encounter with the Almighty. In the present age, when religion, as it appears, makes a small appeal to men, even blasphemy, I suppose, fails to excite us.

But in this earlier and more respectable time to which I am now going back, Secularism, as I have said, had the charm of a new and menacing thing. In Leicester, which, as I have said, used to be called the "metropolis of Dissent," Secularism also became a flourishing cause. When I was first introduced to it, however, it still wore a humble exterior. One Sunday evening I went for the first time, with my friend George Findley, to the room in Humberstone Gate, where the Secularist meetings were then held. This, if I remember rightly, was in December 1873. I was then only nineteen, just emerging from a studious solitude, and with that fresh interest in the great questions of religion natural in one who had barely escaped from a wrestle with the problems of God and immortality. I looked forward, therefore, with almost awful anticipation to hearing the lecturer on this occasion. He was no less a person than George Jacob Holyoake himself, the founder of the Secularist body. He had the greater prestige for me and others, because he was the last person who in England had been imprisoned for atheism; and although this event had happened as far back as 1841, it had left him with a sort of martyr's halo which strengthened his appeal to us young "Freethinkers."

Leicester Secularism.

When I first heard him, Holyoake was, I suppose, about fifty-seven years of age. He had a fresh-looking, rosy face and silvery hair, and wore that sort of chin-adornment which Napoleon III had made fashionable, and which was called an imperial. Indeed, according to my recollection of him, he had a superficial resemblance to such portraits of the Emperor as I have seen. He had a rather thin and high-pitched voice, but he had been both a student and a teacher of elocution, and his oratory was almost fastidiously finished and dainty, so that, in spite of the natural poverty of his vocal organ, his speaking produced an agreeable and impressive effect. I remember, on a subsequent occasion, hearing him deliver what he called a "sermon from Shakespeare." It was based on Macbeth's soliloquy, "If it were

George Jacob Holyoake

done when 'tis done," and his dramatic delivery of the lines was a remarkable example of the triumph of art over nature.

A Gentle Atheist.

Holyoake was much addicted to whimsical and paradoxical statements. I forget what was the subject of his address when I first heard him, but I remember his alluding to some religious body—perhaps the Primitive Methodists, or the early pioneers of the Salvation Army—as "the most disorderly worshippers that God has." But, instead of being the formidable, aggressive atheist that I had doubtless pictured to myself, he was, in matter and manner, a most respectable, mellifluous personage, recalling Byron's

> Mildest mannered man
> That ever scuttled ship, or cut a throat.

Holyoake and Newcastle.

One other memory I associate with this evening. Holyoake, at the end of his lecture, excused himself for having to hurry away, on the ground that he had just heard of the death of his friend Sir Joseph Cowen, which necessitated his leaving for Newcastle. I could not know then what significance the name of Newcastle was afterwards to have for me. I did not then know, either, that Holyoake was a sort of link between me and Comte, with whom he had had an interview in Paris eighteen or twenty years before, and who had proposed to him to translate into English one of the volumes of his *Politique Positive*. This proposal eventually came to nothing.

Impressions of Secularism.

This my first Secularist meeting—if, as I think, it was the first—made a deep impression on me. It was so deep, in fact, that I went home and wrote a poem about it. I found the meeting pathetic. It was held in what was strictly an "Upper Chamber"—a low-roofed, humble room above a stable. Even now I can recall the odours of the stable which floated in through the half-opened windows while Holyoake was speaking. For reasons which I have already

indicated, I had not, at this time or any other, much sympathy with the Secularist, or Freethinking, movement, as such. My interest was in religion. Intellectually, moreover, I had sat at the feet, not of the Secularists, but of such men as Carlyle, Mill, Emerson and Matthew Arnold. I was a lover of the poets. I had been educated in the Church of England, and was still haunted by the cadences of its liturgy, and the charm of its ordered worship. This Upper Chamber of the Secularists, although I was carried into it by certain real common convictions and sympathies, had, therefore, no beauty for me. It seemed a home of forlorn souls, struggling amidst the flood of the modern religious revolution, and desperately seeking a new land of promise. I could not see then, and I could not see later, what was to be the end of their quest. I was engaged, however, in the same spontaneous fellowship of search, and this made me all the more sensible of its pathos.

A Nineteenth-Century Scandal.

The audience, at this and other Secularist meetings, belonged, for the most part, to what we should now call the Proletariat—a word which, in spite of Comte's use of it, had not, in 1873, become current in England. But there were also a few members of the shopkeeping and manufacturing classes at the meetings. Among these, I remember, was a Mr. Michael Wright—a zealous and sturdy Secularist, who, however, was not without a feeling for the limits and weakness of Secularism. At the time of which I am now speaking a certain Colonel Valentine Baker had caused a great sensation throughout England by an assault on a young lady in a railway carriage. He was sent to prison for some months, and after his release entered the Turkish service, and became a Pasha. This case was much discussed by all sorts of people, and among others by the Secularists. Michael Wright said he thought Secularism needed a "moral whip." On another occasion, when he was lamenting the slackness and indifference of Secularists, he said—with the Midland Counties' indifference to the letter *h*—"the fact is, Secularists need a little 'Ell." Why the Secularist Hell was to be "little" I do not know. But, as we are all

aware, Hell or no Hell, slackness and indifference—and even the grossest immorality—are to be found in all bodies and movements. Neither Hells nor Heavens appear to be a preservative against them.

Josiah Gimson.

The chief man among the Leicester Secularists at this time was a Mr. Josiah Gimson. He established an important engineering firm, which still, I believe, exists and flourishes in a much developed form. Gimson was a remarkable man, successful and prosperous in his business undertakings, but also a sort of apostle in the field of religion. He was a thinker among Freethinkers, and was as fair-minded and scrupulous in argument as he was honest and bold. At that time it required no ordinary courage for a man in a good social position to mount a wagon in the streets of a large town as an advocate of Secularism. Besides being a Freethinker, however, Gimson was a man of uncommon benevolence and generosity, with an open purse for all good causes, irrespective of creed. Secularism itself he understood as a movement of social service and progress, and he spent his money on it, freely but sagaciously. Leicester Secularists owed mainly, if not exclusively, to him the large lecture hall and club rooms—the only such building, I am inclined to think, which Secularism has ever possessed—which, as I suppose, stand to this day in Humberstone Gate. On the outer walls are, or were, to be found effigies of Jesus Christ, Voltaire and Thomas Paine—these three—a symbol of the intellectual tendencies of Leicester Secularism when Gimson was at its head, and built its hall.

James Thomson.

When this hall was first opened the event was, of course, for Leicester Secularists one of high importance; and a number of prominent members of the body were present from other parts of the country. I do not now recall all their names, but among them, I think, was James Thomson, who is still remembered as the author of *The City of Dreadful Night,* and has been called the "poet of despair." He was at that time well known as a contributor to Freethought publications—one of them edited by my friend G. W. Foote—under the sig-

nature of "B. V." His life has been written by Mr. H. S. Salt. At the opening of the Leicester Secular Hall one of his poems—written especially for the occasion—was read and distributed. I still have a copy of it. Perhaps Thomson's "despair" was partly due to his own character and experiences. Like some other poets, he was the victim of drink and narcotics. As I was walking about Leicester one day, at the time of his visit, I met a forlorn-looking and broken-down man with a friend of mine, and was introduced to him as "B. V." Bradlaugh, as I remember, was not among the Secularist leaders who came to the opening of the hall. There were, as I have mentioned, conflicts and schisms in the body—a "moderate" party, mainly adherents of Holyoake, and an "aggressive" party, supposed to be of the school of Bradlaugh. The Leicester Secularists were chiefly followers of Holyoake.

Lectures to Secularists.

It was not in this handsome Secular Hall, but in the humble "Upper Chamber" above the stable that I made my own first appearance as a lecturer. I remember that in this somewhat uncongenial atmosphere I chose as my subject the "Functions of Poetry and Art"—hoping, I have no doubt, in my youthful priggishness, to help the Secularists to realize that there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in their philosophy. Be this as it may, they were, then and always, indulgent and generous to me. They frequently asked me to lecture to them again—either in the Upper Chamber or in a room in the Temperance Hall which they afterwards rented. As I was not yet versed in extemporaneous speaking, these early lectures of mine were first essays in the art of writing. Among my subjects, as I have said, were *Holy Living and Dying* and the *Imitation*, and I remember speaking on Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*, which was then a new book, audacious in argument, and charming in its literary style. When I recall the publication and effect of that book, and compare it with what now passes for boldness in "Modernism" or the "Higher Criticism," I sometimes wonder whether our stubborn English mind has learnt anything, or moved at

all, during the last fifty years. Eventually, a few of the Secularists began to grumble at my giving them so much, as they said, which they could have "heard in the churches," but Gimson and some others were on my side, and so also was my friend George Findley, who had by this time become a sort of disciple of mine.

Destructive and Constructive Secularists.

Findley, as I have explained, had been "brought up" an atheist; I, by a process of intellectual development which many others were also undergoing, had been carried out of all theological belief. We both, therefore, had a good deal of natural sympathy with the Secularists. Their views and action, however, seemed to us to be predominantly destructive, and we set ourselves, therefore—or I set myself, with Findley as an active helper—to the promotion of a "constructive" Secularism. A number of the Secularists themselves, in fact—in Leicester and elsewhere—were tending in the same direction. They were, as I have put it, of the school of Holyoake, rather than of Bradlaugh; and their leader among the younger men was, at that time, G. W. Foote, although at a later period he had a very different reputation. With these "constructive Secularists" Findley and I co-operated, as far as possible, while still maintaining a friendly relation with the main body.

The "National Reformer."

It was, in fact, under Bradlaugh's auspices that I made my first appearance in print, such as it was. Several of my Leicester lectures, with some other contributions, were published in the *National Reformer*, a paper which he established and edited for many years. After his death, it passed under the control of J. M. Robertson, of whom I shall have something to say in a later chapter, and who has since become well known as a literary critic and a Liberal politician. I can only remember one of my articles which Bradlaugh rejected. This was a notice of Swinburne's little book on Charlotte Brontë, in which, as I thought, he unduly depreciated George Eliot. Bradlaugh said he disagreed with my view, and agreed with Swinburne's. At that time, of course, Swinburne was the great poetic voice of those

whom we should now call the men of the extreme "Left"—an outspoken Freethinker and Republican. The people who now speak of the "Victorian Age" as if it were only an age of narrow conventions and self-complacency, apparently know nothing about it.

Essays in Hymn-writing.

My first essays in printed prose were followed, or accompanied, by my first essays in printed verse. This verse took the form of hymns. Some of the worst of these hymns have even achieved a certain small popularity. They have, at any rate, been printed in a number of collections, English and American, Secularist, Positivist, "Ethical" and even Nonconformist. I should now describe them as hymns of ethical platitude, and I am inclined to think that there has ceased to be a demand for productions of this order, as I have received no inquiries about them for a number of years. Perhaps they were really "Victorian," and are unsuited to this great age of the Fifth George. At one time people who had broken away from dogmatic Christianity liked to have their moral sentiments expressed in vague general statements which committed them to nothing in particular. Possibly the taste for that sort of thing has died out.

Secularist Women Speakers.

In the 'seventies, however, people who believed in nothing else believed in hymns. Even the Secularists, as I have just said, had their hymn-books. One of them was published by the Leicester body, and was compiled by my friend Findley.[1] Another was edited by no less distinguished a woman—for surely she has, in various ways, been distinguished—than Mrs. Besant. It was in these same Leicester 'seventies with which I am now immediately concerned that I first heard that eloquent and moving speaker. She was then, I think, on her first lecturing tour, and had already, when she came to us, become famous for her brilliancy and intrepidity. Woman orators were not then so numerous as they have since become. Least of all were they to be

[1] *Secular Hymns.* Compiled For The Use of The Leicester Secular Society. Leicester: Freethought Book-store, 1882.

MRS. BESANT IN THE 'SEVENTIES

found in such a movement as that of the Secularists. I can, in fact, recall only one woman lecturer for Secularism besides Mrs. Besant. This was a Mrs. Harriet Law—a stout and loud-voiced personage, whose violent declamations used to make themselves heard, and almost felt, far beyond the limits of the hall in which she spoke. Peace to her ashes! She had the courage of her belief, or unbelief, at a time when it required no little courage to be the public champion of any unpopular cause against the oppressiveness of English conventions. But I must own that those of us who supposed ourselves to have some literary or artistic fastidiousness could not easily love Secularism as it came to us from the mouth of such a daughter of thunder.

Mrs. Besant.

Mrs. Besant was a being of a different order. I have heard a good many women speakers since I first heard her, but among them all she still seems to me incomparable. She was, I suppose, the first woman in English history to gain eminence on the platform, and although she has since had a number of rivals, not one of them, I am sure, has produced such an impression on the public as that which she made on us at that time. Her success was due to various causes. She was young and attractive, with dark eyes, a face alive with emotion and expression, and a voice full and sonorous, but musical and not unfeminine. Her eloquence was the spontaneous utterance of a rich and vivacious personality, but it had, in addition, the charm of thought and effective art. She was, perhaps, too uniformly earnest and indignant in her denunciation of bigotry and obscurantism; and the relieving touches of wit and humour seldom found a place in her discourses. This, however, seemed to us natural. She was, or we thought she was, a martyr—having won freedom from domestic and clerical oppression at the cost of social proscription and isolation. She was facing a hostile world on behalf of liberty and truth; and we young men, who had the passion of these things in our souls, responded readily to the passion with which she pleaded for them. We were carried away. Mrs. Besant's portrait was on sale at the close of the lecture, and I still have the

copy of it which I bought at the time. Its colours are now faded, but the image of this young prophetess of religious and political progress, as she appeared in her first lecturing tour, is yet fresh in my mind.

The "Fruits of Philosophy."

I cannot now remember whether, when Mrs. Besant first lectured to us in Leicester, she was already associated with Bradlaugh in the publication of a notorious little pamphlet called the *Fruits of Philosophy*. If she was not, she certainly became so a short time afterwards. This, of course, added to her prestige with all lovers of free discussion and social advancement, but it also aroused against her the fury of the great company of British Pharisees. Macaulay, a hundred years ago, commented on the grotesque spectacle presented by the English people in "a fit of morality." We had one of these fits of morality when Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant undertook the publication of the *Fruits of Philosophy*, which advocated artificial birth control, and told people how to accomplish it. This pamphlet in itself had almost no merit at all and some demerits. Bradlaugh's object in issuing it, he said, was mainly to vindicate the right of free speech. It was not new. It had, in fact, been openly circulated, in England and America, for forty years, but for some reason a belated English obscurantism took the opportunity, in the late 'seventies, to raise an angry protest against it. Bradlaugh eventually won his case, exhibiting a mastery of law in the law courts, and a mastery of civic courage in the greater court of public opinion. All this is now ancient history. The first advocate of birth control was an Anglican clergyman ; the last, or the greatest, was an English Freethinker. The battle has now been won—in spite of the recent anachronism of some of our judges, who dignify social prejudices with the name of law—but we ought not to forget that it was Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant who won it, and who in winning it made a more fundamental contribution to human progress, than has been made by all the noisy activities of politicians and all the academic discussions of the economists.

But my own personal relations with Mrs. Besant had no connection with her publication of the *Fruits of Philosophy*. She was also, as I have said, the editor of a book of hymns,[1] and to this book I made several contributions, under the signature of "M. M." These contributions are less interesting to me now, however, than Mrs. Besant's attitude in regard to them. She gave me a very cordial welcome as a hymn-writer, but, I remember, objected to my use of the word "divine" in my verses. Her hymn-book was avowedly "atheistic and republican," and she said the word "divine" would be "misleading." I pleaded Tennyson's example, good or bad, in "a daughter of the gods, divinely tall," etc., but she was still fearful as to the effect of the word on her Secularist readers. I was a little surprised at this, because Mrs. Besant, if not a poet, was at least poetic, and had the literary instinct. However, I altered the expression to please her. On the other hand of another of my hymns, in which I had apostrophized "Mother Nature," she said it was "just the thing they wanted." I thought of these things some forty years later, when I last heard Mrs. Besant lecture. She was as eloquent as ever, but was then pleading the cause not of Secularism, or of Malthusianism, or of Socialism—each of which has in turn been a gospel for her—but of a sort of Hinduism; and her dark eyes gleamed forth from some sort of white and gauzy garment, as from the robe of an Eastern prophetess.

Mrs. Besant's Hymn-book.

Another Secularist editor who published some of my early verse and prose was G. W. Foote. I first made his acquaintance in Leicester, in the 'seventies. He was at that time, as I have said, a chief representative of "constructive" Secularism, as distinguished from what was supposed to be the negative and aggressive Secularism of Bradlaugh. He was, in fact, a wider-read man than any of the other Secularist leaders, and brought to his apostolate not only a poetic and historic

G. W. Foote.

[1] *The Secular Song and Hymn-book.* Edited by Annie Besant. London: C. Watts.

sense, but the care and order of a deliberative mind. He had a somewhat striking appearance—a big body and a head to match. He might have said that in looks at least, he was "every inch an Englishman," and an Englishman of the Anglo-Saxon type. On the platform he was argumentative and convincing, rather than vehement and dashing, and won his way by knowledge and good reasoning. At the time when I first got to know him he was, I think, editor of a weekly paper called *The Secularist*—competing, if I remember rightly, not only with Bradlaugh's *National Reformer*, but with another paper called *The Secular Review*, edited by Charles Watts. In its appearance and literary quality the *Secularist* was easily the best of these three journals. It was, in fact, too good to live, and its life, accordingly, was not a long one. Before it died, however, some verses of mine appeared in it, and were, I think, the only "profane" poems—as distinguished from those intended to subserve the cause of my "apostolate"—that I have ever published.

I shall have something more to say of Foote at a later stage. At present I am confining myself to my Leicester life, and to a time when he was, in a certain sense, and within the limits of Secularism, an antagonist of Bradlaugh. But although we "constructive" Secularists had our grounds of disagreement with Bradlaugh, we still thought of him with pride and admiration. He was always the great heroic personality of Freethought—a representative master of social initiative and courage. These days of which I am now speaking were above all the days of public debates. I could not and cannot, imagine anything less fit to be the subject of a sort of platform duel than the solemn and complex problems of Christianity. Popular audiences, however, at that time loved these encounters; and Bradlaugh was, or was supposed to be, especially expert in them. I remember going to one of these debates in Leicester in which he was pitted, I think, against a man named Roberts—a representative, perhaps, of the Christadelphian body. It struck me at the time as a singular performance. These two

Bradlaugh in Debate.

theological combatants were not ill-matched. Both, of course, were armed with the Bible—a two-edged sword; and such names as Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Irenæus were flying about—much, as I should suppose, to the bewilderment of the audience. Bradlaugh was built like a Titan—big in body and big in head. He had, however, none of the traditional sluggishness or stolidity of the giant. He was all nerves, and lay in wait for his opponent with an intense and watchful eye, eager to pounce upon a chronological error, or an argumentative slip, and to spring to the encounter once more, when it was his turn to reply. Denunciation, invective, sarcasm, passion—all these were recognized aids to "discussion" on both sides; but when it was all over, the two champions amicably separated, after dividing the "takings."

"Bible Eights" and "Liberal Eights."

While, however, at this time, as always, religion was my dominant "interest"—including such religion as entered into Secularist discussions—I felt instinctively, even before I recognized it philosophically—that it was an interest embracing all others. I was, at any rate, a keen student of politics, looking at them, at that time, I suppose, from the point of view of an advanced "Liberalism," although it was a Liberalism in which there was a good deal of intellectual detachment, and which was flavoured with a sort of romantic Conservatism. In the early years of the 'seventies, of course, the education question was one of the great causes of controversy—especially what was called religious education. It was the time of the first school board elections; and what they chiefly turned on was not the kind of popular instruction that ought to be given, but what use ought to be made of the Bible. Liberalism was supposed, by its opponents, to be against the Bible—so much so that in one instance which I remember a "Bible Eight" stood in opposition to a "Liberal Eight." These were the days when a sort of "school board religion" began to prevail—the religion which Mr. Gladstone, towards the end of his life, denounced as a "moral monstrosity," although he had himself played a chief part in setting it up. I do not think I was ever, any

more than Mr. Gladstone, a lover of this improvised school board religion, but I was at least a sort of Liberal, and I followed the great debate with keen attention.

Visits to Catholic Churches.

Even while I was a listener to Secularist lecturers, in fact, and a contributor to Secularist periodicals and hymn-books, I was still drawn to something for which, I must repeat, I can find no better name than "religion." From time to time, as I have mentioned, I continued my attendance at various churches and "chapels." It was at this period, too, that I first began going to Catholic services. The chief Catholic place of worship in Leicester was then—and I suppose still is—Holy Cross, in the New Walk. It is a Dominican Church. It was not very common in those days for non-Catholics to go to Mass. Even now, indeed, I know people having a keen interest in religion, who have never gone inside a Catholic church, and I have heard of some who confessed that they have always regarded it as rather a daring, and perhaps a wicked, thing to do, and that even to be in the company of Catholics gave them a "creepy" sensation. These feelings, I dare say, are dying out. When I attended Catholic services fifty years ago, however, I was doing what I think was then an unusual thing—at any rate for a "Freethinker."

A Leicestershire Monastery.

The most definite Catholic impression which I associate with that time is connected with the Trappist monastery of Mount St. Bernard, near Coalville, a few miles from Leicester. On the Saturday before Easter in 1877, I paid a visit to that place with some friends. The Abbey was then a kind of holiday resort, or show place, for Leicester people, most of whom, it is to be supposed, went to it without any very definite sympathy with Catholicism, or Monasticism. In spite of my "Freethought," I personally found it interesting and appealing. It was an early Easter. The air was cold. The sky was bleak and cloudy. The monastery stands in a somewhat wild and desolate country. As we approached it, we saw some of the monks scattered about the fields, engaged in agricultural work. At a later stage, while we were waiting for permission to enter the building, we

could hear their resonant voices chanting the office. It was a strange experience for us—"Secularists," or mere idle holiday-makers, of the nineteenth century—to visit the chapel, the refectory and the dormitories, and to meet the silent monks in the cloisters, reading as they walked. It is one of my distinct Catholic recollections, and certainly not a disagreeable one. More than twenty years later, I visited Mount St. Bernard's again. I remember I then got a sort of spiritual shock when I saw some brewer's men, unloading barrels of beer for the Abbey. I do not know why. Dr. Johnson says: "He who drinks beer thinks beer"; but I do not think there is anything in the monastic rules which prescribes teetotalism. My second visit to Mount St. Bernard's, however, was not quite like the first.

CHAPTER IV

NORTHERN SECULARISM

TOWARDS the end of 1878 the course of my fortunes carried me to Newcastle-on-Tyne—or, as some local purists insist on saying, Newcastle-*upon*-Tyne—where, as the fates willed it, I was to spend a good thirty years of my life, and do most of the work which gives their interest, if any interest they have, to these pages. Newcastle, in fact, became for me an adopted city; and although I had eventually to follow the counsel given to apostles and, shaking off the dust of my feet, to leave it, I shall never cease to think of it with interest and affection. It is, in truth, no mean city; and when, in the darkness of a November evening, I first crossed the High Level Bridge and saw the gleaming lights of the Tyne—with the Norman Keep, built seven hundred years before, looking austerely down upon it, together with the singular tower of St. Nicholas' Cathedral—I felt a stirring of history and romance which my mediocre Midland towns had not awakened in me. At that time, however, the old church of St. Nicholas was not yet a cathedral, and Newcastle, in a technical sense, was not a "city." It was not till some years afterwards that the Durham diocese was divided, and Newcastle, which was already both a town and county in itself, with its own sheriff, possessed also a bishop of its own.

Settlement in Newcastle.

In time I came to be numbered among those who are proud to count themselves "Novocastrians." Newcastle is not so black as it has been painted. Its central streets were planned by men of vision, with a feeling for space and dignity. It has the colours of a stirring past stamped upon it, and it is the

The Town and the County.

centre of great modern industries. It was a town of importance when Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds were unknown. The river, where I first heard the ringing hammers of the shipwrights, links it with the life of the world. It is, too—in fact if not in form—the capital of a beautiful county, where, when you have once got past the coal fields, you may wander, if you will, among ancient castles and churches, romantic, wooded streams and picturesque villages; and where knights and saints—to say nothing of marauding Scots—have left their legends behind them. The sea also there comes rolling close up to the rocky shore. You have no need to go in search of it, as on some parts of the West coast. Its climate has its critics; and when I woke up, the morning after my arrival in Newcastle, to find myself shivering in a fireless lodging, with one of the greatest snow-storms of my experience attacking the city, I felt that I had come to a polar region. As a matter of fact, however, I had thirty years of good health in Newcastle, and nowhere happier holidays than in Warkworth and other delightful seaside villages of the county.

Solitude in a City.

But, naturally, after the early impressions of curiosity and interest had subsided, my first dominant feelings in my new city were of isolation and companionlessness. I was in a special sense lonely, both in mind and life. I was a member of no church. I was connected with no political party. I was an adept at none of the games, indoor or outdoor, which commonly set up a sort of fellowship among men. I had no social introductions. I had my studies and books, of course, and the great cause of Positivism—for such it now began to seem to me—was establishing itself in my mind. Still, all this inevitably left me, to begin with, thrown much upon myself.

The Mind of the Apostle.

I had, however, coming over the High Level Bridge into Newcastle, carried Comte in my mind. Before leaving Leicester, too, I had talked a good deal about him to my friends there. I do not know whether the "apostolic" disposition is always admirable, but at any rate, I had it.

> "But thou wouldst not *alone*
> Be saved, my father! *Alone*
> Conquer and come to thy goal,
> Leaving the rest in the wild."

Thus Matthew Arnold in *Rugby Chapel*. Without argument, or any attempt at self-justification, I followed a similar impulse. When I became, or was becoming, a Positivist, I tried to make converts. This was too great a light to be hidden under a bushel. The first of these converts was my friend, George Findley. In spite, or because, of the fact that he had been brought up an "atheist," his was an apt soul. He was one of the bruised and delicate spirits of our modern anarchy, and was reaching forth to some haven of peace and freedom. He, too, in his turn, moreover, what he gained gave to others.

Newcastle Secularists.

But my Positivism, during those first months of my Newcastle life, was of books only. I knew nothing then of individual Positivists, or of any "Positivist Society," or "Positivist Church." When, therefore, I began, as I almost immediately began, to look about for companions among those who were, in some degree, like-minded with myself in religion, I had at first to find them, as before, among the Secularists. There was at that time some kind of a small Secular Society in Newcastle. It held its meetings in a place called the Sons of Temperance Hall, in Pilgrim Street; and one Sunday evening I made up my mind to venture into this sanctuary. It was, like the first Secularist Room in Leicester, a somewhat unlovely Upper Chamber, and the apostles who were gathered together in it struck me as a weird and singular company. My recollection is that on this occasion—or if not on this, on some other soon afterwards—a hot discussion was in progress, not on any religious question, but on the British government of India. There were fierce statements and counter-statements about such things as Indian land tenure, the caste system and the native money-lenders. What especially impressed me was the red-hot earnestness of the rival orators, and their unsparing denunciation of

one another. It was almost like being present at a prize-ring combat. I had been used to a milder style in the Midlands.

Orators of Secularism.

Among these disputants was a man named David Rule. He was then, or became afterwards, Turkish Consul in Newcastle. He was a remarkable-looking being, with a pair of keen, convergent eyes under bushy white eyebrows. There was no toleration in his argumentative temper, but he practised a sort of Parliamentary deportment, and aimed at the dignity of an orator. One of his opponents was a tall, dark man, with what seemed to me then a peculiarly savage manner, and large black eyes which struck me as having an almost demoniac stare and glare, as he turned them menacingly from time to time upon his opponents. That was my mistake. I made enquiries about this man, and found that those fierce eyes were sightless. Their owner was known as "Blind Elliott," and he was afterwards a familiar figure to me, moving with sure and dignified carriage about the streets of Newcastle. David Rule, I think, and possibly Elliot, were members of a body known in Newcastle at that time as the "Foreign Affairs Committee," which took an active and useful interest in international affairs. It is not every provincial town that has had such a Committee.

Mending and Ending.

Along with others present at this gathering was a young man named William Grant. He was the first of my Newcastle friends. He was a Scotchman from Inverness—a commercial man, but, in his way, a reader and thinker, who, like many other Presbyterians and non-Presbyterians I have known, had read and thought himself from Christianity into "Free-thought." He was tall and good-looking, and had the buoyant, self-confident manner of a man robust in health and prosperous in fortunes. He has long been dead, like so many others of my friends of that time who seemed as if they ought to outlive me. His view of Secularism was, or became, much like my own. He wanted, at any rate, as I wanted, to make the Newcastle meetings less like a bear-garden, and more like a school, or a forum. We

accordingly put our heads together, and, in concert with some others, devised a plan to "reform" the Society. The meetings became more decent and regular, I gave lectures on two or three occasions—on the *Imitation* and similar subjects—trying, as I had tried in Leicester, to transform Secularism into something different from what Nature intended it to be. It was, doubtless, a well-intentioned effort, but it was a failure. The bear-garden which I had found was at least living. The order and decorum which we tried to impose upon it were fatal; and eventually the meetings came to an end.

Bradlaugh and Politics.

For some time, however, I maintained relations with the Secularists. This was the last year of Lord Beaconsfield's Government. There was a great stir in public life. Bradlaugh, who, as I have said, had been candidate for Northampton once or twice, was bent on pushing his political fortunes. He was a bold man, and an idealist. He had published a book called *The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*, and was an outspoken Republican. On one occasion, he said humorously, touching his head, "I should be the first President of the English Republic, if it were not for these grey hairs." A good many men younger than Bradlaugh was then have become grey since his time, but we have not yet got our Republic. The moment, however, was opportune for Bradlaugh as a politician, and he proposed to come to Newcastle, among other places, to speak at a meeting. The difficulty was to get a room for him. He was an avowed and aggressive atheist. He had published the *Fruits of Philosophy*. We tried to secure the Town Hall for him, but the authorities were respectable Englishmen, and, reasoning as respectable Englishmen commonly reason, they held that as he had advocated such views on religion and procreation, he ought not to be allowed to speak against the Tory Government. They refused the use of the hall.

I have never, I own, been as patient as it is doubtless wise to be with insincerity or muddle-headedness. I consulted with some of the Secularists, and we decided, in

the first instance, to try to induce the authorities to reconsider their decision. The authorities in question were the Finance Committee. With a small deputation of the Secularists, I went before this Committee, and harangued them on behalf of political freedom. They were mostly middle-aged or elderly men, and I—to use a word to which John Morley once gave a momentary vogue—was a "stripling." The Secularists said I spoke well. They afterwards called me their "Attorney-General." I did not speak well enough, however, to convince the Committee. They still refused us the hall. Then we arranged for a meeting in a large room in Percy Street—called at that time, I think, the Circus. It was crowded from floor to ceiling. Bradlaugh was in the chair, and I was deputed to move a resolution in condemnation of the authorities. Unfortunately, with so vast an audience for the first time before me, I suffered from "stage fright"; and, to make matters worse, when I rose to speak, Bradlaugh kept on repeating to me, "be brief, be brief." I was so brief that when I had moved my resolution I sat down. The Secularists, I remember, censured Bradlaugh for his want of consideration.

Bradlaugh and Free Speech.

With Bradlaugh I never had much personal contact, although he came to Newcastle from time to time and spoke about Secularism in the old Lecture Room in Nelson Street. It was then a famous meeting place. Now, I think, a "Picture House" flourishes where the great Freethinker used to thunder forth his arguments against the Bible and the Churches. But with my friend, G. W. Foote, I developed the relations which had begun in Leicester. He was the editor of various successive publications—first, as I have mentioned, the *Secularist*, and afterwards the *Freethinker*, which, after fifty years, still flourishes. But he also brought out two monthly magazines, one called the *Liberal* and the other *Progress*. They had no long life. To both of them I was a contributor, under a *nom-de-plume*. I did not then write avowedly as a Positivist, for although Positivism was fixing itself in my mind, I had not decisively defined my

Foote's Publications.

attitude towards it. Comte was my chief master, but Carlyle, Mill, Matthew Arnold and some others, still counted for much with me. But my articles in Foote's magazines, like my lectures, were in a religious sense meant to be "conservative," and "constructive."

The only one of these articles which attracted any public notice was one on "Newspapers and God." Another was on the "Emotional Basis of Orthodoxy" —only interesting to me now because of its insistence on the value of the Christ-idea, when positively and poetically understood. Another article, however, arrested the attention of some Edinburgh Secularists, and they spontaneously reprinted a part of it as a leaflet. This was followed by an invitation on their part to lecture for them, and I gave my first Edinburgh lecture on a Sunday in 1881. The Secularists whom I found there were of a type much superior to most of those whom I had known elsewhere. Their active and guiding spirits were young men of thought and reading. One of them was T. C. Martin, who then held some responsible position in connection with the Post Office, but was besides a musical and dramatic critic for one of the Edinburgh papers. At a later date he was well known as editor of the *Dundee Advertiser*, and, in the fulness of time—perhaps during Lord Rosebery's premiership—was among the first journalists to be knighted. When I gave my "Secularist" lectures under his chairmanship, in the Chambers Street Hall in Edinburgh, we were I dare say, far from anticipating this particular kind of distinction for him. I should like to think that he did nothing to deserve it.

Sir T. C. Martin.

Another of the bright-witted and capable Edinburgh Secularists whom I then met for the first time was a dark-haired, dark-eyed, soft-spoken young man from the North named J. M. Robertson. He was then assistant-editor of the *Edinburgh Evening News*, and was already as alert in mind, and as remorselessly keen in speech, if not quite as omniscient, as he has since proved himself to be to a wide public. We always had a free discussion after my lectures, as after others;

J. M. Robertson.

and if Robertson had any share in it—as I think he must have had—I am sure I must have suffered much from the dexterous spear-thrusts which then, as ever afterwards, he could give to his opponents, either in print or on the platform. As I had written on "Newspapers and God," so Robertson, about this time, wrote on the "Farce of Journalism." He played his part in the farce. But he has also played other parts. He succeeded Bradlaugh, as I have mentioned, as editor of the *National Reformer*, and, as all the world knows, he has written many books on many subjects. He has, so far, not risen, or sunk, to a knighthood, but he has been a member of Parliament, a member of the Government, a Privy Councillor, and President of the National Liberal Federation. To the farce of journalism has succeeded the farce of politics. Years after the Edinburgh days I met him again, as I shall set down in its place.

Dr. Glasse.

After these first lectures in Edinburgh, I went there to speak for the Secularists on several occasions. I once spent a week there with my future wife, who was a guest of the hospitable Martins. Apart from the lectures, I loved to wander about in the New Town and the Old Town, where the spirit of the great Sir Walter had moved before me. I also added to my Edinburgh acquaintances. One of these was Dr. Glasse, then well known as Minister of Old Grey Friars, who died only two or three years ago. When I first knew him he was sympathetic with the Secularists, and he was afterwards a prominent Socialist. At a later period he came to see me in Newcastle. Among other things I showed him my church containing a series of busts, representing Comte's historic calendar. including Michael Angelo's Moses, with its horns. "I am afraid," said Glasse, "Modern criticism would make short work of your Moses." It struck me as not a little paradoxical that we Positivists should be more conservative in religion than this Modernist Presbyterian minister, who apparently did not draw any distinction between a historic personality and a historic symbol.

My contributions to Foote's magazines continued, I

think, till the end of 1882. Then I discontinued them. The reasons, good or bad, why I did this belong to the history of my religious mind. I had by this time become in a definite sense a Positivist. In so far as I had ever been a Secularist, I was a Secularist with conscious and important reservations, preserving my independence and insisting on what was positive and constructive in the movement, as distinguished from what was merely negative and critical. Foote had appealed to me especially because he represented this side of things, and because he was, moreover, a man of literary and historic insight. Then he suddenly—or so it appeared to me—changed. His *Secularist* had come to an end. The *Liberal*, too, had collapsed. He brought out the *Freethinker*. It was entirely different, in spirit and method, from his former publications. It was bitterly, scornfully and, as I thought, scurrilously anti-Christian. So long, however, as it confined itself to a merely literary and argumentative opposition to orthodoxy, although I disliked its tone, I continued my connection with Foote, to the extent of writing articles for *Progress*, which he published concurrently with the *Freethinker*, and which was on a much higher level. But soon he added cartoons to the arguments; and these cartoons—some of which were comic representations of Christ working miracles—seemed to me so flagrant an offence against ordinary human charity and the reasonable susceptibilities of good men that I wrote my remonstrances to Foote. On the principle of letting a dead man speak for himself, I give his reply.

The "Freethinker" Cartoons.

A LETTER FROM FOOTE.

9 South Crescent,
Bedford Square,
London, W.C.
November 8, 1882.

My dear Quin,

In schoolboy language, which I hope is not inadmissible in your haughticultural system, I was deuced glad to see your fist again. It seems a very long time since I last saw you, and I assure you I shall be very glad indeed to meet you in the flesh once more,

and especially to make the acquaintance of your wife, who, I am given to understand, is much the better Freethinker of the two.

I am so steeled against the criticism of enemies and the rebuke of friends that I am able to shake off your censures with an easy laugh; although I am somewhat surprised that your sympathy leans rather to the vicious and hypocritical law than to its possible victims. Liberty is more precious than systems; it overarches them all, as the soaring azure dome of heaven overarches with equal ease a cottage and a pyramid, a hillock or a Chimborazo. I am ready to pay any price for it, and I am ready to fight for it against any odds. Hypocrisy shall not put me down. I detest it as the mortal enemy of mankind; and I feel such pleasure, and such a sense of righteousness, in attacking it through the *Freethinker*, that I would not relinquish the task for any other. *Progress* will not supersede the *Freethinker*. It will work for the same ends—truth, justice and humanity—in a more positive and serious way.

Thanks for your promise. I shall be glad of the article by the 25th. I send you a pamphlet, which will enlighten you on the prosecution. The gaol door is open. If I am thrust inside, I will answer punishment for blasphemy with more blasphemy.

Yours faithfully,

G. W. Foote.

As this letter shows, my remonstrances, such as they were, were useless. Foote continued the publication of his cartoons, and such was their effect upon my mind that I wrote again to him, saying that I must discontinue writing for *Progress*. Naturally, he resented and condemned my attitude, and although there was no definite rupture of our personal friendship, our relations were, in fact, suspended for some years. *Progress*, indeed, died. It was the *Freethinker* that lived. Shortly after our correspondence on these points, Foote was tried for blasphemy—owing entirely, I think, to the character of the cartoons in his paper—and was sentenced to a rather long term of imprisonment. He had, however, good friends in the world of literature and liberal opinion—among them, I think, George Meredith, for whom he always expressed a high admiration. Eventually a memorial was presented to the authorities, asking for his release before the expiration of his sentence. This memorial was successful. Among those who signed it, as Foote afterwards told me, was John Morley—Lord Morley as he afterwards became. John

Foote's Imprisonment.

Morley has been famous for many things, but he was once famous for spelling the name of God with a little g. That, I suppose, is not blasphemy, and at any rate it did not involve Morley in imprisonment. It did, however, cause him some trouble when he became a Parliamentary candidate for Newcastle.

Foote, the Blasphemer.

I did not like Foote's cartoons, and I do not like them now, as I summon them up in memory. But I am glad to have numbered this blasphemer among my friends. He was a man of honesty and courage —not such common qualities as we may suppose. His love for liberty was deep and equal-minded. He had no fanatical temper. He could be juster to his opponents than they, as a rule, were to him. His last letter to me was at the end of 1909, and in it he called my attention to articles he had written against the French Government for its persecution of the Catholics. Among my books are two presents from him, inscribed with his name. One is Shakespeare's sonnets, for he was an ardent Shakespearian; the other is the *Confessions of St. Augustine*. Freethinker as he was, he was a student of the Fathers. I remember his speaking to me with appreciation of Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light." An Anglican clergyman said to me not long ago that he "loathed" the *Imitation*, and he proceeded to speak in praise of Nietzsche as "one of the great Christians of the nineteenth century." I do not profess to know what the word Christian now means; but if it ever comes to mean a man of right reason, social courage, and human devotedness, my friend Foote, the blasphemer, may perhaps have as good a title as Nietzsche to be counted among Christians. After the resumption of our relations, he was several times my guest at Newcastle. He died during the war, just while he was securing another victory for Freethought in the law courts.

CHAPTER V

THE EARLY HISTORY OF POSITIVISM

THE Positivist sympathies and convictions which I had, as I have explained, gained from Comte, and which I had brought with me into Newcastle, were, in the first instance, simply the sympathies and convictions of a student. I was in relation with no other Positivists. I knew almost nothing about them. Such religious and political companionship as I had I found, as I have shown, among Freethinkers and Liberals. But, as I have also shown, I was not satisfied with this. I wanted something deeper and wider—something to fill the mind, and take the place of the religion which I had outgrown, and which had yet left in me a persisting deposit of memories, affections, imaginations and ideals. Secularism could not do this. Liberalism could not do it. Neither literature nor science in itself could do it. Positivism did it ; but Positivism was as yet only a theory for me, and what I needed, or felt that I needed, was something more than a theory ; it was a synthesis expressing itself in an order of worship and life, individual and social. It was a Church.

The Need for a Church.

I had heard somehow, I suppose, that there was in London a Positivist Church, or a " Church of Humanity," but beyond this I knew nothing of it, except that Dr. Richard Congreve was its head. In September 1879, however, I wrote to him. It was the beginning of a correspondence which lasted till his death, twenty years afterwards. My only immediate object in writing to him was to ask him for some information about a French Positivist review then edited by Littré—well known as the author of the great dictionary, and as

Positivist Divisions.

the first man of European reputation to accept Comte's philosophy. In his reply to my letter, Dr. Congreve not only gave me this information, but made me aware of what I had before only vaguely understood—that Comte's disciples, small as was then their total number, were divided in opinion, and were even organized—in so far as they were organized at all—into separate and hostile groups. This state of the little Positivist world, as it existed in the year 1879, was destined to be of great importance for me. It is, too, as I think, of high significance not only in relation to the history of Positivism, but in its bearing on the problem of religion in the modern world. It is necessary, therefore, to say something here about its nature and causes.

Comte and Philosophy.

Comte's life and work, broadly speaking, cover the first half of the nineteenth century, for he was born in 1798 and died in 1857. The book which first made him famous—and by which he is perhaps best known even now—is his *Positive Philosophy*. He himself always referred to it as his "fundamental" work. There had, of course, been many philosophies before Comte's, and there have been philosophies since. In one respect, however, and an exceedingly important one, Comte's philosophy was, and remains, original and unique. It was a philosophy, or synthesis, of all the great sciences. Before his time philosophy, for the most part, had fallen into one or other of two main categories. Either it was a philosophy conditioned and limited by some established religious Belief, which it did not avowedly challenge or disturb—such, for example, as the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas or Bishop Berkeley—or it was an independent attempt, apart from authoritative dogmas, to deal with some of the great questions—questions of God, the soul and the "first causes" of man and the universe—on which religious Belief as an argument has fundamentally turned. If philosophy fell into the former of these two categories, Comte—using terms of distinction on which he always insisted—called it "theological"; if it fell into the second, he called it "metaphysical."

Comte's own philosophy, in principle, was non-theological and non-metaphysical. It was scientific, or positive.

The Positive Philosophy.

He was himself what I have had to call an Unbeliever. He had, moreover, rightly or wrongly, reached the conclusion that the state of mind which we denote by the word Unbelief, was, in the future, destined to be the state of all mankind. He even held that he had discovered a law, or continuous process, of intellectual development by which men, as a result of the increase of knowledge and rational power, were being inevitably carried to a disbelief in any god, as they had formerly been carried by a similar development to a disbelief in many gods. He considered that the only complete and ordered view of man and the Universe—and consequently the only basis for systematic education and action—which was possible for the modern mind was to be found in science. The object of his Positive Philosophy was to provide this view and basis. Before he could construct it, however, he felt it to be necessary that the principles and methods of science should be made universal in their application by being brought to bear on the mind and life of man, as a social and moral being—in other words, by the foundation of the distinct and unifying science of sociology. It was only when he had accomplished this preliminary scientific task—one which, in principle, as is obvious, is of supreme and governing importance—that he found himself able to link the sciences together in a synthesis or philosophy, giving man a positive and complete representation of himself in relation to the universe, and at the same time an instrument for his own fulfilment as an individual and social mind, dependent on the order of nature.

This, in brief, was the Positive Philosophy. It was a scientific philosophy. It was not only independent of

Exclusion of Religion.

religion, but exclusive of it. That was Comte's own view. He contemplated, and expressly said that he contemplated, the entire disappearance of religion—the thing and the word—from the life of man. Religion, he held, necessarily implied

"supernatural Belief"—belief in such invisible entities as "God" and "the soul"—and while such a belief was natural, and even beneficent, in earlier states of the human mind, it was destined to die out, and give place, sooner or later, to the Positive Philosophy. In the vocabulary of that philosophy, therefore, and in its application to the life of man, there could be no place for such words or institutions as Supreme Being, religion, church, priest, worship, soul, sacraments, prayer or immortality. All that would be needed in the future would be a Doctrine, a School and a Teaching Body—along, of course, with the organization of the State and industry.

The publication of the *Positive Philosophy*, which was a work in six volumes, began in 1830, and finished in 1842.

Comte's later Work.

Comte's second great work was the *Politique Positive*, in four volumes, translated into English as the *Positive Polity*. The first of the original volumes appeared in 1851 and the last in 1854, but the important Introduction to the work was published separately in 1848. The *Politique* is described on the title-page as a "Treatise on Sociology, Instituting the Religion of Humanity." It was followed, in 1856, by his last book, the *Subjective Synthesis*, of which he only lived to write the first volume. Besides the *Politique* and *Subjective Synthesis*, he wrote, at this period of his life, the *Catechism of Positivism, or Summary Exposition of the Universal Religion*, which was published in 1852. With these books ought to be mentioned a little treatise called the *Appeal to Conservatives*.

The difference between Comte's *Philosophy* and his *Politique*—together with his *Catechism* and his *Synthesis*—

The Positive Religion.

can only be rightly understood when it is remembered that he remained to the end what he was at the beginning of his philosophic career—an "Unbeliever." His last book was as much as his first "scientific," in the sense of rejecting all "supernaturalism" and "theology." The principle proclaimed in the Introduction to his *Politique* was "Reorganization without god or king." That principle he never abandoned.

Nevertheless, the distinction to be drawn between his "fundamental work" and his later ones is itself fundamental; for while in his *Philosophy* he, in the name of science, or Positivism, decisively and finally rejected religion, in his *Politique*—equally in the name of science and Positivism—he affirmed it to be indispensable. Further, not only did he thus give to the general word religion a place in the vocabulary of Positivism, but along with it he restored the words "Supreme Being," church, worship, prayer, priest, soul, sacraments and immortality. All these terms, he maintained, admitted of a scientific, or "positive," interpretation and use, without any reference to a supernatural being or "soul," or to a supernatural life after death. In his last work he even went beyond this, and taught that science alone, or a scientific philosophy, necessary as it was, could not by itself satisfy man in his representation of the universe to himself, but that such a representation must also include poetry or fiction, and that from this point of view it was permissible to supplement "laws" by "wills," and to subjectively ascribe definite human attributes not only to inanimate nature, but even to such an abstract idea as Space.

A New Religion.

In his later works, in a word, Comte gave forth a "Positive Religion"—non-theological and non-metaphysical—as in his earlier works he had given forth a Positive Philosophy. This religion he undoubtedly conceived of as a "new religion." He regarded himself as its "founder"—its St. Paul. Of the organized church in which it was to find social expression he claimed to be the first high-priest, or Head. As such, he conferred one of the sacraments which he had instituted. He contemplated the time when the various theological churches of the world—Christian and other—would fall into disuse, and be either taken possession of by Positivism or be replaced by "Positivist Churches." Comte's "new religion," nevertheless, was in certain respects only an old religion, with many of its conceptions, terms and institutions understood and applied in a positive sense. It was, in a single word, a positivized Catholicism, although with important omissions, as well

as important developments and additions. For the Catholic theology Comte substituted the Positive Philosophy of the sciences, supplemented by a subjective and poetic—or, as he called it, "fetishistic"—interpretation of the cosmos. By the "Supreme Being" he understood Humanity, considered as a universal, continuous and organic social whole, with all its evil elements abstracted or disregarded. Worship was homage, private and public, rendered to Humanity, so conceived, along with the Earth and Space. Prayer was a form of commemoration and invocation. The soul was man's cerebral functions, regarded as a unity. The sacraments were ceremonial institutions, intended to consecrate the significant stages and functions of the individual life. By "immortality" was meant life in the minds and lives of others, after death. The Positivist priesthood was to be an organized body of professors teaching the philosophy of the sciences in the schools, superintending public worship, giving forth political counsels and even discharging the office of doctors; and—to complete the resemblance between the old church and the new—this priesthood was to have as its head a high-priest, or Pope, seated, however, in Paris, instead of Rome.

The New Church.

It is plain that the difference between Comte's attitude in his earlier work and in his later was not theoretical only; it was—what is obviously of high importance—practical also. In his *Philosophy* he wrote simply as a thinker. He constructed a philosophy of the sciences, which was to act upon the mind of the world, as other philosophies had done before. He might conceivably have followed the same method in his later work, and contented himself with showing—what, in fact, had been shown, in degree, before his time and has been shown since—that ancient theological conceptions and institutions admit of a positive, or "Modern," sense, and use. He might, in this way, in principle, have "positivized" the whole of Catholicism, leaving it to others to freely accept or reject his ideas, as other ideas are accepted or rejected, and trusting to their scientific character to eventually secure their ascendancy. What he actually

did was different. He instituted a "new religion." He established a new church or sect. He claimed to be its founder. He acted as its first "high-priest." He demanded from its members not merely examination and a reasoned acceptance or rejection, but faith and submission. He appealed not for readers and students, but for personal "disciples," and declared that his best adherents would be found not among educated thinkers, but among women and workmen.

The New Religion and the Old.

While, however, Comte thus proclaimed a "new religion" and organized a new Church, he still insisted that they were continuous with the old. How far this was true can be easily seen. Catholicism—the religion which certainly influenced his construction the most—turns fundamentally upon three related master-ideas—Christ as God, the Mass and the Papacy. In its Scriptures, doctrine, worship, sacraments and organization—including the monastic and religious orders—Christ, from first to last, is its central and dominating conception. The Virgin undoubtedly plays a signal and beautiful part in it; but the Virgin, nevertheless, derives her importance in Catholicism from her relation to its three fundamental ideas. Of these three ideas, however, Comte absolutely excluded Christ from all commemoration and honour, referring to Him as the "pretended founder of Christianity"; the Eucharist he left "unpositivized," while positivizing most of the other Catholic sacraments, all of which derive from it meaning and cohesion; the Papacy he supposed to become extinct in Rome, and he instituted it *de novo* in Paris, making it proceed from himself, as the founder of a new religion, and "successor of St. Paul." He considered the Virgin the connecting link between Catholicism and his own religion—not, however, as the mother of the God-Christ, but as a sort of prototype of Humanity, pictured in a personal and feminine form. It is true, on the other hand, that he ranked the *Imitation of Christ*—which scarcely refers to the Virgin—first among the poems of the world, and himself used it as a daily devotional companion. Even so, he held that the book was wrongly

named, and disparaged its beautiful chapters on the Communion.

Comte as Man and Thinker.

In order to understand Comte's attitude as the founder of a new religion and a church—and, therefore, his influence on his disciples after his death—it is necessary, further, to take into account the effect of his life on his work. He was something more than a thinker and author; he was a personality. In no unworthy or discreditable sense of the words, he had a high idea of his own importance, and did not hesitate to bring his private experiences into his public writings. He was a scientific philosopher and a sociologist, but he was also a man of imagination and romance. He was, too, a many-sided and changing genius. While he was shaping his *Positive Philosophy* his predominant interests were those of a severe scientific systematization. Afterwards, however, he underwent a remarkable æsthetic development. He became an ardent lover of music and poetry—a word which he always used in a sense which made it inclusive of all the arts—and his new artistic sympathies played a part in the expansion of his philosophic genius. They enlarged his estimate of the needs and history of the human mind, and entered into the construction of his religious synthesis.

Comte's Moral Life.

Another thing that entered into it was his own spiritual progress. It has been said of Spinoza that he was a "God-intoxicated man," and Mill similarly said of Comte that he was a "morality-intoxicated man." Yet, as a young man in Paris, and afterwards, he was, as he himself has told us, not what we are accustomed to call moral. His sexual habits were irregular, and when he was twenty-seven he married a courtesan—a courtesan, however, who was of considerable intellectual capacity. In 1845, again, when he had separated from his wife, he formed a passionate attachment to Clotilde de Vaux, a young married woman, whose husband had committed a crime which entailed a life-sentence. She had a clear and sprightly intelligence, and some literary aptitude. Their "friendship" was ended, a year afterwards,

by her death, but while it lasted Comte undoubtedly did his best to persuade her to become his mistress. At a given point, too, she wrote frankly offering herself to him in that relation, and only drew back on realizing that, after all, she was not in love with him.

Comte's "Conversion."

This romantic episode—as Comte, after Clotilde's death imaginatively conceived and transformed it—exercised an inspiring influence on his genius, or co-operated with its native tendencies. Clotilde de Vaux became to him a sort of goddess. He constructed for himself a scheme of worship in her honour—including a set of "prayers," consisting chiefly of poetic quotations, and of a kind of calendar of his relations with her. The chair in which she had sat in his room was an "altar" for him. He ascribed, too, to her subjective influence the life of self-discipline and regeneration which he ever afterwards lived. He put an end to his sexual irregularities. He abandoned his snuff-taking, and condemned smoking as "one of the most striking symptoms of modern anarchy." He had always been temperate, but he now became a water-drinker instead of a wine-drinker. He devoted a portion of his time every day to reading a chapter of the *Imitation* and a canto of Dante. He imagined Clotilde as the interlocutor of his *Catechism.* It was his hope, too, that her image would eventually represent Humanity—considered as the "Supreme Being"—to religious Positivists, and that the remembrance of her last illness would take the place of the celebration of Christ's Passion.

Comte's Later Changes.

Lastly, in the sum-total of the influences which, as a sort of spiritual legacy, Comte bequeathed to his adherents, we must include the remarkable and rapid changes which he underwent in regard to the practical application of Positivism. When, for example, he published his *Catechism* in 1852, he proposed to "exclude from political supremacy all the various slaves of God, Catholic, Protestant and Deist, as being both reactionary and a source of disorder." Only a comparatively short time afterwards, however, he invited the General

of the Jesuits—whom he preferred to call "Ignatians," so as to avoid all recognition of Jesus—to join him in forming a universal "Religious League," to preserve society from disruption, and insisted that it was better to belong to any religion than to no religion. From a similar point of view, he recommended his disciples to subscribe to the funds of the Catholic Church in France, should it ever be disestablished. Another of his signal changes was in reference to periodical publications. After having himself, in his latest years, made unsuccessful attempts to establish a Positivist review, he ended by condemning and proscribing all journalism. These variations in Comte's mind and policy are important because, when he had himself changed, he expected his disciples to change also, accepting his later views, and rejecting the earlier. Some of them did this; others did not; and those who professed adhesion to his final opinions denounced those who remained faithful to such as were only a little earlier.

After Comte's Death.

It is this changing and developing mind of Comte, in its varying expressions of itself, which is the key to the Positivist situation as it existed in 1879, when I first became acquainted with it. He died in 1857. Even on its theoretic side, his work, as he had planned it, was unfinished, for he had proposed to write three or four important volumes—one of them a treatise on morals—which he did not live to undertake. On the practical side it was still more incomplete. His "church," as an organized society, did not exist, even in embryo. There was not a single man among his religious disciples—most of whom, nevertheless, were men of parts and culture—whom he considered worthy to be his successor as its head. He died, therefore, without nominating any one to that position. He had indicated two or three of his disciples—including Dr. Congreve—as suitable for the priesthood. He had, however, not actually appointed or consecrated them. He had set up no school, and he had not even decided on any practical scheme for educating his priests. He had instituted a "Sacerdotal Fund," but he left no money for their maintenance. He had

himself precariously subsisted for some years on a subsidy voluntarily subscribed for his maintenance, and he died a poor man. He had instituted no form of worship. His only church, or temple, was his own house, 10, Rue Monsieur-le-Prince. His disciples were disagreed, and inclined to be mutinous. He himself declared that he could never be sure that at any moment, they might not all abandon him. Some of them, who were of the school of Littré, Mill and Lewes, avowedly rejected his religion altogether, and affirmed that he had departed from the principles of his Positive Philosophy. Most of his adherents had, in part, originally been drawn to him by his Philosophy, and only accepted his religion theoretically, and with reservations.

The Word "Positivist."

It is clear, therefore, that the term Positivist, by itself, is as ambiguous and misleading as it is possible for any word to be, for it denotes both those who absolutely reject all religion and those who maintain that it is essential to the existence of human society. Further, as I have just said, those who professed to accept Comte's religion, differed among themselves in their conception and application of it. The three principles which were, in practice, alone common to all Positivists—whether "non-religious" or "religious"—were "emancipation," or the rejection of the "supernatural"; the insistence on science; and a varying acceptance of Comte as their teacher. In other respects they disagreed.

A "Director of Positivism."

After Comte's death, nevertheless, his "religious" disciples were at least sufficiently united to co-operate in providing for the maintenance of his house, 10, Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, as a seat of Positivist action, and in electing a sort of "successor" to him. The successor they actually chose was M. Pierre Laffitte, a man of great ability and knowledge, who, at a later date, was appointed by the French Government a professor at the Sorbonne. He remained till the end of his life, many years afterwards, what was commonly called the "Director of Positivism."

He gave various courses of lectures and wrote a number of able volumes, partly philosophical and partly historical. He continued too, Comte's "Sacerdotal Fund," and followed his practice of issuing "Annual Circulars," in which he gave an account of receipts and expenditure, together with a record of Positivist events. He maintained, also, a certain relation with English Positivists, who, for a considerable time, all professed to regard him as their "leader," and insisted on the importance of recognizing and supporting the Paris centre.

Dissatisfaction and Schism.

Eventually, however, much dissatisfaction began to be felt and expressed, both in France and England, at the character of Laffitte's "direction," such as it was. It was considered to be too exclusively "intellectual," and to be wanting in religious spirit and initiative, especially in the sphere of worship. In 1877—twenty years after the death of Comte—this dissatisfaction found manifestation in an open movement of revolt; and in 1878 a number of Laffitte's adherents, French and English, decided to separate themselves from him, and to form an independent group. The head of this new group, or its leading mind, was Dr. Richard Congreve, who was one of Comte's original disciples, and who was at this time sixty years of age. Comte had shown a great and increasing confidence in him, and it was under his instigation that Congreve wrote a memorable pamphlet entitled "Gibraltar, or the Foreign Policy of England," in which he proposed that we should inaugurate a new era in international relations by voluntarily restoring Gibraltar to Spain. This was followed by other bold and independent essays on foreign policy.

Dr. Congreve.

Dr. Congreve was under Dr. Arnold at Rugby—first as a pupil, and later, I think, as an assistant-master. He was a tutor of Wadham College, Oxford, which might almost be described as the academic nursery of English Positivism, for it was there that Frederic Harrison and others came under his influence. Congreve had taken orders in the Church of England, and, as he once humorously boasted to me, was at one time "the rising

hope of Anglican Evangelicanism." He was certainly never sympathetic with the Oxford Movement. I once spoke to him of Newman as a "great man." "No," he said, "he was not a great man; he knew nothing of Comte." On another occasion I mentioned to him Manning's "Liberalism": "Yes," he said, "an archdeacon's Liberalism"—Manning, of course, having been an archdeacon in the Church of England. Congreve was a scholarly man, and had published an edition of Aristotle's *Politics*, with introductory essays which may still be read with advantage. He sent this work to Comte, who confessed that he could make no use of it. "Bonaparte," he said, "had not retrograded as far as Greek when I went to school."

A Positivist Priest.

When Congreve became a Positivist, he accepted Comte's religion gradually and cautiously—for that was his nature—but he nevertheless accepted it wholeheartedly and seriously, dedicating his life to it. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that he was the only one of all Comte's original disciples who did so. He had the religious spirit. He had been a Christian priest, and as far as he could, he meant to be a Positivist priest. Knowing, for example, that Comte had included medicine within the domain of the priesthood, he, in middle life, entered upon a course of medical study, and took a doctor's degree, without, however, practising. Readers of George Eliot's life will remember her references to Congreve, who was one of her early friends, at the time when he was walking the hospitals. He did all this at his own cost, as he was fortunate enough to be the possessor of sufficient private means. But although he was an unpaid minister of the new religion, he was in no other sense an amateur. His service was his life's work freely chosen, and freely discharged for forty years. He consecrated all his powers to it.

The new Positivist group, French and English, which Congreve had been instrumental in forming, and of which he was for a short time the head, became, in 1881, a purely English group—with, however, a few Indian members. The French adherents, while not disagreeing

with it in principle, and while remaining dissociated from M. Laffitte, ultimately ceased to form part of it, but, at the same time, took no independent action in France. Moreover, a number of English Positivists—who had been Dr. Congreve's colleagues, and in a loose sense, under his local direction, until the rupture with Laffitte—now separated themselves from him, and formed another English group. The leading members of it were Frederic Harrison, Professor Beesly and Dr. Bridges. They had disapproved of the separation from Laffitte, and remained in connection with him. They now organized themselves under what was called the "English Positivist Committee," and eventually had their headquarters at Newton Hall, Fetter Lane, while Dr. Congreve and his supporters remained, as before, at 19, Chapel Street, Lamb's Conduit Street. The distinction between his group and the group which more or less acknowledged the leadership of Frederic Harrison in time resolved itself, in our English Positivist dialect, into the difference between "Chapel Street" and "Newton Hall." Apart from Dr. Congreve, the Chapel Street Positivists were men of less distinction and capacity, and they certainly made a smaller appeal to the general public, than those who were associated with Frederic Harrison.

"Chapel Street" and "Newton Hall."

The "Newton Hall" Positivists—to employ the designation which was in use among those of us who followed Dr. Congreve—represented what may be called a characteristic English mixture, or compromise. They did not describe their place of meeting as a "church," or label their doctrines the "Religion of Humanity." They were Positivists, teaching Positivism. They had no "priest." They were under the government of a committee. They did not profess to set up a form of worship. They made no attempt to introduce prayer. They confined themselves, for the most part, to giving lectures. They published a little monthly magazine, called the *Positivist Review*. Comte, in his later—or rather his latest—life had, as I have said, discountenanced journalism,

The English Positivist Committee.

and exhorted his disciples to have nothing to do with it, although not long before this, he had himself made an unsuccessful attempt to set up a periodical, called the *Revue Occidentale*. Laffitte, however, in spite of his master's prohibition, actually issued a review under that title, which I believe still exists. The Newton Hall Positivists followed suit. They preferred the mind of Comte which sanctioned journalism to the mind which condemned it; or they preferred their own view of the matter.

"Newton Hall" and Religion.

But although the Newton Hall Positivists had neither priests, ritual nor prayer, they still made use of certain practices and terms which have been considered religious. Like the Secularists and the Ethical Societies, they eventually introduced hymn-singing, and I have to confess that in the later hymn-book which they issued some of my own compositions are, or were, to be found. They organized "pilgrimages" —that is to say, visits to places associated with eminent men. They even celebrated some of Comte's "sacraments" and, on one occasion at least, Frederic Harrison went so far as to conduct a Positivist marriage ceremony, although without insisting on the conditions which, according to Comte's teaching, were essential to its spiritual validity. "Newton Hall," however, cannot be said to have had any great religious significance or distinction. It was, for the most part, an excellent lecturing society, chiefly differing from other lecturing societies—and this undoubtedly was an important difference—in possessing Comte's social and political teaching as its governing doctrine. What gave it its principal interest for the outside public was Frederic Harrison's addresses, which were almost always brilliant literary exercises. He was a man of wealth and social eminence, and for a number of years gave Positivism such vogue and prestige in the great world as it actually enjoyed. To most people in England, in fact, he was its representative and commanding figure.

"Chapel Street" was a different thing. Dr. Congreve had the vision and aims of a priest, or of an apostle-priest.

He had actually been nominated for the Positivist priesthood by Comte. In an address which he delivered in 1859,[1] he said that he considered himself as discharging the office of a "vicar" in that priesthood—a vicar, in Comte's hierarchy, being the functionary midway between the "aspirant" and the full priest, who must have attained the age of forty-two. Congreve, in 1859, was slightly under that age, and was too scrupulous to claim a distinction to which, chronologically, he felt he was not strictly entitled. He nevertheless held himself to be of the Positivist priesthood, and he carried into his new position something of the temper and traditions of the Anglican ministry. He described this meeting in 1859—two years after Comte's death—as a "congregation." He ended his discourse with a "benediction." He declared that in putting forward Positivism "as a religion" the "boldest course was the wisest." That he himself was a man of singular spiritual intrepidity cannot be doubted. He proved his courage—a courage quietly unflinching and persistent, devoid of anything in the nature of provocative bravado—by his public action, religious and political, on more than one occasion. When he set his hand to the plough, he never turned his back upon it. He might be censured for rigidity, but never for instability.

Dr. Congreve and the Church.

Nevertheless, although he sounded this definite religious and priestly note in 1859, he did not, even twenty years afterwards, describe his meeting-room in Chapel Street as the "Church of Humanity." It was still, as before, called a "Positivist School" although it was a school in which "festivals" had been, in a way "celebrated" and "sacraments" administered. It is not till January 1881, that we find his "Annual Address" described as having been delivered at the "Church of Humanity." After this, for some time, the word "church" is used in conjunction with the word "school"; and it is only in the year 1885 that "school" is finally dropped and "church" stands alone. This was

School and Church.

[1] *Essays Political, Social and Religious*, I, 278.

seven years after the separation of those who came to be known as the Newton Hall Positivists.

The "Chapel Street" Worship.

What is true of the word church is true of forms of worship. Direct prayers to Humanity were not adopted at Chapel Street until October. 1877,[1] twenty years after Comte's death, although, as Congreve himself declared, Comte had sanctioned such prayers in his *Catechism*.[2] After this other prayers were gradually added together with "lessons," or readings, organ-performances and an altar. Hymns never found a place in the Chapel Street service. Dr. Congreve attributed this publicly to the smallness of the congregation, but in my experience it was always large enough for singing; and he himself gave me to understand that there was a steady under-current of opposition to it. I think the probability is that most members of his congregation were "cultivated" and fastidious, and considered hymn-singing a little beneath them. There was also, however, the difficulty of finding suitable hymns. In the same way, they never knelt for prayer, but adopted the standing attitude; and when, towards the end of his life, Congreve threw out the suggestion that it was time to consider the question of whether kneeling was not the better posture, the suggestion bore no practical fruit. The compilers of the Anglican Communion Service at the Reformation appear to have been faced with somewhat similar difficulties. Congreve never ventured on vestments of any kind—not even on the simple ribbons with which Comte decorated his arms for a religious ceremony. He administered his sacraments in an ordinary morning coat.

Congreve's Congregation.

At the end of his forty years' ministry, in fact, Congreve's forms of worship had not advanced beyond a sort of modified reproduction of the service which he, as an "Evangelical" clergyman, had been accustomed to in the Church of England. It was the model which, consciously or unconsciously, influenced his experimental effort. But it was influenced by other causes—some of them personal to himself, some of them

[1] *Essays Political, Social and Religious*, II, 85. [2] *Ibid.*

going deep into the religious difficulties of the modern mind. He was, as I have said, courageous. He was not afraid of initiative. He could stand alone. But he was not, in any conspicuous sense, an artist, although he was a lover of the arts. He had no great feeling for music. He was not a "ritualist." He had no special affinity with what was spectacular. He was a master of discrimination and judgment, rather than of moving expression. He was, moreover, remarkably sincere and candid—averse to adopting forms and ceremonies which had no sanction in the convictions of his congregation. He would rather give too little than too much. He disliked rhetorical exuberance. That, I think, was one of his reasons for being critical of Frederic Harrison.

Prayer in Positivism.

But the reasons for Congreve's slow advance and meagre "output" in ritual go deeper. When Comte ceased to be merely a positive philosopher, and became the founder of a Positive Religion he imposed upon his followers a problem of unparalleled difficulty—the problem of converting that religion from a theory into a fact. This problem may be said to turn fundamentally on two great questions. One of them is the question of prayer. If Catholic or Christian prayer admits of being "positivized"—that is to say, of having a right scientific meaning and use assigned to it independent of all supernatural Belief—then it is plain that, in principle, the whole of Catholicism admits of being positivized. If prayer which implied the existence of "God" can rationally be assigned a place in a religion which is professedly "without God," it is obvious that the whole wide gulf between "supernatural" religion and positive religion may in principle be bridged. On the other hand, if prayer cannot be so "positivized," nothing that is counted "supernatural" in Catholicism can be positivized.

Now, Comte sanctioned the principle of prayer in Positivism in the Introduction to his *Politique* in 1848, and insisted on it again in his *Catechism*. But he never made any public practical use of it; and his private

" prayers " were really, as I have shown, only a sort of diary of his relations with Clotilde de Vaux, supplemented by some poetical quotations.[1] In the two skeleton schemes of systematic " worship " which he actually drew up prayer finds no place; and so little importance have his so-called " religious " disciples attached to it that from Comte's death to the present day there has been, so far as I am aware, no public Positivist prayer in Paris. Even the Brazilian Positivists—in other respects dogmatically insistent on conforming to Comte, and abusive of all who did not conform to him—for many years had no formal prayer in their church, and I am not sure that they have it even now. The Newton Hall Positivists, as I have shown, never made any attempt to introduce it. Dr. Congreve was the first, and for some time the only, Positivist apostle to adopt a practice which Comte had declared to be " indispensable to any worship whatsoever "; and even he waited twenty years before doing so.

Comte and Prayer.

This, I am sure, was not due to any want of conviction or want of courage, on his own part. It was due to the fact that his " congregation," or " church," was a church only in name. Its members were without the basic agreement which is necessary to the constitution of an organic religious society. It was a part of Congreve's first task, as an " apostle," to create such an agreement, and he never, to the end, succeeded in doing so. The second of the two questions on which the realization of Positivism, as a " religion," fundamentally turns, is the question of the priesthood. There can, of course, be no priesthood where there is no church. Comte described himself as a " high-priest " but he was in fact not a priest, for he had nothing that could rightly be called a church. He had only a number of disciples who were in a state of disagreement, with him and with one another, and of whom he himself, as I have mentioned, said that at any moment they might conceivably all desert him. In the same way, Congreve's priesthood was devoid of reality—

A Nominal Priesthood.

[1] *Testament D'Auguste Comte.*

except as a principle, and ideal in his own mind. On the two fundamental questions of prayer and priesthood—considered as practical questions—his "congregation," with few exceptions, were either indifferent or opposed to him.

Congreve and his Associates.

When the Newton Hall Positivists had separated from him, Congreve publicly declared[1] that "chronic discord and imminent rupture" had prevailed in the group while they remained in it. He had, he said, never had from them anything "worthy of the name of faithful co-operation," and he had even "failed to secure from them the commonest respect and esteem." It was years, he affirmed, since he had ceased to see in Professor Beesly "a loyal supporter"; and Frederic Harrison, he said, had "implicitly charged him with lying."[2] Whether Congreve was, or was not justified in these statements, they at least show how little the conditions of the body over which, in a sense, he presided, were those of a concordant and organized church. Frederic Harrison, in his autobiography, if I remember rightly, has described him as a "pope in a back parlour," and Professor Beesly once said to me in conversation that if I had had to work with Congreve, I should have thought very differently about him. What we actually know is, as I have said, that the Newton Hall Positivists, being free to do so, made no attempt to set up prayer or priesthood, and never described themselves as a church.

A House Divided.

It was not, in fact, as I have pointed out, till seven years after their secession that Dr. Congreve himself ceased to designate his meeting-place a "school," and called it a "church" pure and simple. In justice to "Newton Hall," too, it must be said that, even after they had left him, the remnant of his congregation were anything but united. One of his chief supporters, and an old personal friend, Dr. Blake, in a public letter to myself expressed his total dissent from his methods of worship and prayer. Some of his

[1] *Essays Political, Social and Religious*, II, 80.
[2] *Ibid.*, II, 91.

members left him because he failed to introduce congregational singing, to which others were opposed. One, in my experience, became a Roman Catholic, a second a Christian Scientist, a third a Baptist, and a fourth—whom he consecrated to the priesthood along with myself—was never afterwards heard of in connection with Positivism. Under circumstances such as these, a man may give his life to a cause, and hold in his mind the vision of a great church ; but he cannot be a priest—any more than he can be a husband without a wife.

Ambiguities and Illusions.

The history of Positivism, in fact, has been largely a history of ambiguities and illusions. In a Circular issued at the beginning of 1879,[1] Dr. Congreve himself—a man, as I think, eminently veracious and candid—estimated the total number of Comte's " complete disciples " at that time as about two hundred, including all the members of both Positivist bodies. By the expression " complete disciples " he said he meant " disciples who accept, though in different degrees, the Religion of Humanity." He intended by this, I suppose, to distinguish between the Positivists who were of the school of Littré, and who avowedly rejected Comte's religion, and those who professed to adhere to it. Even as applied to the latter, however, it is clear that the term " complete disciples " was misleading. Laffitte and Dr. Congreve were both " complete disciples," but the latter, after twenty years of association, had to separate from the former, on the ground that his action was insufficiently " religious " ; while to the Brazilian Positivists, at a later date, Laffitte was always the " sophist of the Sorbonne." There was, I think, no sophist among Positivists, of whatever school. They naturally and honestly disagreed. At the time of Comte's death, in 1857, the number of subscribers to the " Sacerdotal Fund " which he had instituted—and which was actually a fund for his own maintenance—was 73, of whom 52 were French. In 1878 there were 157 subscribers to the fund administered by Laffitte, 96 being French. This may seem a small number, but many of

[1] *Essays*, II. 793.

them were men of high capacity and culture. What is certain, however, is that these "complete" disciples, according to Dr. Congreve, only accepted Comte's religion in "different degrees," and were not, in fact, either then or afterwards in sufficient fundamental agreement to form a church. They were divided in mind, as their master had been divided before them, and as is the whole wide world of man in our modern age.

CHAPTER VI

PREACHING POSITIVISM

Entry into Positivism.

It was at the beginning of 1880 that I made my formal entry, in so far as it could be considered formal, into the little Positivist world, such as I have described it. In one important respect, as I have pointed out, I differed from most of those who had, up to then, become disciples of Comte. I had not, in the first instance, been attracted to him by his Philosophy, and then slowly reconciled myself to his religion. It was religion that I wanted. I had wanted something which I can only describe as a " scientific religion " even before I knew anything of Comte. He appealed to me for the simple reason that he and he alone seemed to offer it. I do not even now know anybody else who offers it. It has been said, as I have before remarked, that religion is one of the hardest of words to define in any complete and exact sense. What appears to me to be distinctive and central in it is worship, social and public. When people say, as I have myself known many persons to say, that they do not see the need of religion in the modern world, they do not commonly mean by that word merely a " theory of the universe," or a system of morals or culture. To these they have usually no objection. They mean by religion essentially worship ; and meaning this, they do not, for the modern mind, see the sense and use of it. They stand, in fact, exactly where Comte himself stood when he constructed his Positive Philosophy.

I, on the other hand, needed, or felt that I needed, worship, but worship which was the poetic expression and unification of a scientific conception of the universe and man's individual and social action. I do not mean by this,

Doubts and Misgivings.

however, that I had none of the doubts and critical individualism natural to a mind which has broken away from the dogmas and authority of a great church, and been thrown upon itself. I had much of them. For one thing, as I have said, while Comte attracted me in part, he also repelled me in part. I could not imagine myself as giving him an unreserved acceptance. For another, I knew almost nothing of this new "church" with which I was getting into relation. I was, I dare say, somewhat suspicious of it. I could not see it then as I have pictured it in the last chapter. I represented it to myself, I suppose, as a developed and powerful organization, with definite tests and creeds—a "Thirty-nine articles"—which it would be necessary for its members to accept. I was afraid that if I joined it my personality would be submerged. I must have expressed myself in some such sense as this in my first letters to Dr. Congreve; and I give his answers to them both because they help me to represent my own mind as it was—instead of suggesting that it was something different and better—and because they shed their own light on the state of the little Positivist world as it was at that time.

A LETTER FROM DR. CONGREVE.

17, Mecklenburgh Square,
London,
December 3, 1879.

Sir,

I have always made it a rule not to ask any questions, further than for information's sake, of those who are willing to join us, and as I advance in life I incline more and more to look for co-operation in the service of Humanity, without inquiring into the belief. We can all serve, whatever the degree of our belief, which will probably mould itself in a growing way under the influence of service. So far as I know the existing Positivists, they are at all stages of acceptance, few going as far as I do myself. So that you need not fear any pressure being put upon you. M. Comte has left much for his successors to do—he is continually saying so. He has marked out the great lines, and in many directions he has given us very valuable guidance in details. In fact, we have I find when I come to work it too little, not too much. But the

experience of the race will and must tell on the system. I believe it will tell in favour of most of it, but it can only tell by free acceptance. Such is the general principle on which we act. We seek to secure the free concurrence of independent wills. As a demonstrable religion, it must always be open to discussion. Constantly its founder insists on it that all that cannot be discussed disappears, with all that cannot, in the proper sense of the term be demonstrated. I am one of those who think that the more we accept and apply the better, always open to the corrections which such applications may lead us to see to be either temporarily or permanently necessary.

All may co-operate, then, and all may preserve their independence ; and what is more, all do. It is no easy matter to get sufficient agreement for action, I assure you. If you had watched as I have had to do the Positivist body at work, you would fear no undue oppression of your reason. Our antecedents in this country lead most to a very hesitating acquiescence, and make our progress very slow and difficult. But we must not be impatient—only, much time is lost, and much evil is not prevented. Generations will be wasted ; and that is a very painful thought.

Believe me to be,

Yours very sincerely,

RICHARD CONGREVE.

Answers to Doubts.

To this letter—a letter very characteristic of its writer—I must, I suppose, have replied with some further expression of criticism, or apprehension, but at the same time with a statement of some points as to which my mind was settled. At any rate, in a subsequent letter, dated December 16, 1879, Dr. Congreve writes :

A Second Letter.

" There is no subscription to any articles of faith required of any one. The sole outward act of adhesion as yet is the subscription to the Positivist Fund, the minimum usually in England being 3s. But where, as is sometimes the case, that even is a pressure, then a shilling or sixpence would be sufficient. This testifies to the willingness to co-operate to a common end, as it may be only to the sense of benefits received from the teaching.

" But were there any intellectual profession required, yours would be ample. The doctrine of Humanity alone would be sufficient. My own wish is to unite all who can

say that they wish to serve Humanity, and such a credo, with its practical character, answers better to our great motto, which is Live for Others, not Love Others. So here again it is Serve, not Believe. When you add the doctrine of Law, the doctrine of Affection, the necessity of an organization, of a Priesthood, of a discipline, or Rule of Life, I see not what ground there is for your hesitation. I should welcome your joining us most cordially—sure that you will find in concert with us that none will question your satisfactory membership."

An Interview with Dr. Congreve.

The result of this correspondence was that I sent some small subscription to Dr. Congreve's "Sacerdotal Fund," and thus became, in a certain sense and degree, a "member" of the Positivist body under his direction. This was in January 1880. Some months later—in September, to be exact—he paid his first visit to me in Newcastle. It was for me a memorable event. It was the beginning of a twenty-years' relationship. Congreve, according to Frederic Harrison, as I have just said, was "a pope in a back parlour"; but I found myself then and ever afterwards, easily and happily at home with this pope. He was at this time about sixty-two, a man of stately and commanding figure—an "Olympian presence" I think George Eliot calls it—with penetrating brown eyes, a handsome, ruddy face of the "Roman" type, and a fringe of white whiskers, but, for the rest, clean-shaven. His voice in conversation was agreeable, but for public-speaking purposes it was thin and unimpressive. He had no oratorical inflections or gestures. Some time after my first acquaintance with him, he went to Cambridge to lecture on Positivism, and the undergraduates there said that he "preached the enthusiasm of Humanity without enthusiasm." Of course, he did not preach anything of the sort; but much depends on what we mean by enthusiasm. John Wesley, a great preacher, appears to have considered it a form of madness.

Congreve's enthusiasm, such as it was, expressed itself in the form of continuous self-sacrifice and unfailing service. He had been twenty years at work when I first knew him,

DR. RICHARD CONGREVE

and he remained at work for twenty years afterwards. We talked, of course, about Comte, whom he had personally known. I said I "could not consider him infallible." "I do not say he is infallible," he answered, in his pithy style; "I only say that I have never known him fail." That was a moderate way of putting it. I can remember Positivists who ardently and dogmatically affirmed Comte's "infallibility." To issue decrees of infallibility, however, we must be infallible ourselves. My "pope," if he was a pope, did not, in my experience, give himself such airs.

Congreve and Comte.

Congreve had a good deal of that agreeable quality which we represent by the term "old-fashioned." Like Dante, he deprecated hurry. He was dignified and courteous. His language smacked of the past. A hotel was to him always an "inn." He must also, I think, have been one of the last of Englishmen to use the long s in writing. Occasionally, however, he took a quaint pleasure in indulging himself in a "modern" expression. It was about that time that Mallock was writing books on various things, and, among others, one in ridicule of Positivism. "Let Mallock do his damndest," said Congreve to me. It was possibly a quotation, but he gave forth the words as if they had for him some of the relish of original sin. In a later talk, speaking of a young Positivist who was rather formal and pedantic, he said he thought he would be all the better for "a course of American girls." In our first meeting, however, our conversation naturally turned, for the most part, on more serious matters. It left me confirmed in my new faith. It left me, too, feeling that I had been in the presence of a man of spiritual distinction, who was a personal link with one of the great minds of the modern world. "He is a holy old man" said Dr. Spence Watson, the Quaker, whom I introduced to him.

Congreve's Personality.

So soon as I had become, in some significant and definitive sense, "a Positivist," I began my "apostolate." Positivism, of course, was a religion for "Unbelievers; and, in the first place, I naturally looked for my converts

among such Secularists, or Freethinkers, as I had previously known. They were of the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

Preaching the Gospel.

I had, as I conceived it, no immediate mission to Christians. It was a principle, or rule, of Positivists that our appeal, to begin with, must be to the "emancipated"—to those who had ceased to hold any theological Belief. Our distinctive task was to re-create religion for those in whose minds it had lapsed. It was one of construction—not destruction. Comte, in his latest years, had, as I have shown, put forward the idea of a great "Religious League"—a league of all who were on the side of religion, whatever its character, against all who were opposed to it. He had further declared, and Congreve declared after him, that our best audience would be found among women and workmen. My task was, therefore, doubly paradoxical. I had to preach a religion of Unbelief to Unbelievers, and to proclaim a doctrine which was contained in some fifteen difficult volumes of science and philosophy to minds which were mostly ignorant of both. It was a work harder than that of the fishermen; for the Positivist apostle could find no sanction for his arguments in gods and miracles, and there was, apparently, no Holy Spirit to give inspiration and confidence to his faltering tongue.

The Positivist Bible.

My New Testament was the "Positivist Catechism." George Henry Lewes has said of this book, in his *History of Philosophy*, that it has done more harm to Positivism than all that its opponents have written against it. Here again we have the ambiguous word "Positivism." Those who simply want a philosophy of the sciences need not, of course, concern themselves with Comte's *Catechism*; but those who wish to understand his religion could not easily find a better presentation of it within its limits. It is, in fact, a wonderful little book. It is not extravagant to say that it contains more matter for thought than any other modern volume of its size. But it is not an easy book, as Comte appears to have thought that it was; and it is none the easier for being small. An able Positivist friend of mine,

Albert Crompton, used to call it a "poem." "What is important in it," he said to me once, in his blunt and paradoxical way, "is not what it says, but what is there." If it is not, strictly speaking, a poem, it is at least a symbol.

With this little Positivist Bible in hand, however, such as it was, I entered on my mission. There used to be in Newcastle a little valley—called, I think, Pandon Dene—lying between Lovaine Crescent and St. Mary's Place. It is now filled up, and ugly buildings stand where once there was a running stream, with trees and workmen's gardens. In one of these gardens —or in the summer-house connected with it—I began a conversational commentary on the Positivist Catechism to two or three Secularist workmen. A little later, we held our meetings, for a time, in a small room in the Sons of Temperance Hall, in Pilgrim Street—a place which I have already mentioned. Our meeting-place, as I recollect it, was not much better than a lumber room, and I am inclined to think there was a surviving sedan chair in it, belonging to the proprietress, and connecting us with an earlier age. There we sat, some three or four of us, round a bare, three-legged table, with a candle in a bottle to give us light; and I talked, as well as I could—not certainly as Coleridge, according to Carlyle, used to talk on the brow of Highgate Hill—about "object and subject," "statical and dynamical," and the other philosophic or scientific terms with which Comte said the common people ought to become familiar. It was a singular experience.

First Meetings.

After this we met for some time at a place called the French Reading Room in Westgate Road. Here my audience, if it was an audience, was of a rather different quality—men and women of some education and reading, drawn, I think, not from Secularist workmen but from among the young Liberal politicians with whom I was now associating and working. Most of them, however, soon got tired of this "Woman and a Priest of Humanity," carrying on their philosophic dialogue in the *Catechism*. Some of them began to take an active part in establishing the "Tyne-

A "Belectured City."

side Sunday Lectures" which became, and probably still remain, a distinctive feature of Newcastle intellectual life. These lectures appealed to the growing dislike for the definite, the growing passion for the miscellaneous. A Cambridge friend of mine, himself a well-known and brilliant lecturer, used to say that he thought Newcastle was the "most be-lectured city in Britain." One or two of these young men of the French Reading Room, however —among whom was my friend William Grant—remained with me, and became what I suppose I ought to call "converts."

Leicester Positivism.

While I was making these efforts in Newcastle, I also kept in relation with my old friends in Leicester and my new friends in Edinburgh. In Leicester G. W. Findley, whom I had brought forward to "constructive Secularism," I now brought forward to Positivism. He was earnest and devoted, and in his turn became a messenger to others. Once or twice, too, I went to Leicester and preached the "Religion of Humanity" to the Secularists, speaking now not in the little, evil-smelling room above the stable, but in the handsome new Secular Hall. I also gave Dr. Congreve and the Liverpool Positivists an introduction to my Leicester friends. Eventually George Findley set up a little Positivist "church"—as I had by that time already done in Newcastle—in a small room in his own house. I spoke in it once or twice. This little church did not last much longer than Findley himself lasted—which was not very long. Those whom the gods love, or who love the gods, die young. He was too frail a being for our striving modern world; and when the watchman of the tiny temple was gone, the temple itself had only a brief life. There were not many people in the big, bustling town of Leicester, I suppose, who ever knew that such a modern sanctuary was in existence there. It represented a moment in the hidden spiritual drama of the nineteenth century.

In Edinburgh I never succeeded in moving any one to set up a "Church of Humanity." There were two or three Positivists there of the "Newton Hall," or philosophic type,

chief among whom, I suppose, ought to be counted Professor Patrick Geddes, biologist and sociologist. I did not know him at this time, but I afterwards housed him on one occasion in Newcastle, and trudged with him about the roads of Northumberland, when he came for a meeting of the British Association. He was truly a Professor at the Breakfast-Table, discoursing copiously, and finding symbols and illustrations among the cups and saucers. The Edinburgh Secularists were not greatly interested in the new Religion. Some of them were on their way to Parliament, or a knighthood, and "cared for none of these things." After no long time, too, Edinburgh Secularism itself died a natural death. For a while, however, I continued my lecturing visits there; and there also I introduced Dr. Congreve to my friends. He went and lectured for them once or twice. They were an agreeable, bright-witted company, but not meet for discipleship.

Professor Patrick Geddes.

It was about this time, too, that I began a missionary effort in Sunderland which continued, in one form or another, for many years, and produced almost no result. There was, at the period to which I am now going back, a curious kind of nondescript "church" in Sunderland which deserves a word of record in the religious chronicles of the nineteenth century. It was called the "Free Associate Church." The foundation on which it was built was apparently an agreement to differ about everything. For some years it was very flourishing, and attracted large audiences. Those who organized it were skilful in avoiding the perils of theological definition. They had a "service" consisting of hymns, readings and harmonium-playing. There was no prayer, but there was a silent interval of some two or three minutes in which any one who liked could pray in his own mind and in his own way. As there was no common doctrine, the lecturers—among whom I was numbered once or twice—said what they pleased. The "President" of the Church was Mr. William Brockie, a learned journalist, and once a well-known figure in Sunderland and on Tyneside. He had a firm belief in the future

The Sunderland "Free Associate Church."

of this Free Associate Church, but before long he died, and after a time it died also. Dr. Congreve preached in it at my suggestion, and I got from it two or three friends who afterwards became Positivists, and gave me much kind help.

"It seems to me," wrote Dr. Congreve to me in June 1881, "you have been doing much for the cause." Alas for the cause! I had, in fact, done no great things, but only a number of little ones. One great thing, however—so far as my apostolic work was concerned—I managed to do at the end of this year: I got married. My wife was Miss Frances Cookson. She had been partly educated abroad, and had to hurry home from France in the year of the Franco-German War, 1870, just as, forty-four years afterwards, our daughter had to hurry home from Germany at the outbreak of a still greater war. It was a matter of some interest to me to discover that her family had a certain small and indirect connection with Wordsworth. That great poet wrote sonnets about many things and persons, famous and obscure. One of them, entitled "Bala-Bala, Isle of Man," and the subject of it is his friend Mr. Cookson, my wife's grandfather. One of her uncles, Strickland Cookson, was Wordsworth's executor, and finds frequent mention in Henry Crabb Robinson's diary.

Marriage.

One consequence of my marriage was that a number of young men began to come pretty regularly to visit my wife and myself for talk about Positivism, and to listen to her music. It was a way of making the new gospel known. Some of these young men have long been dead; others have since made some sort of a place and name for themselves in literature. One of these was Ernest Rhys, who has since become widely known as the editor of the "Everyman" series of classics and is himself a writer of verse and prose. Another was W. H. Dircks—at one time an editor for the Walter Scott publishing firm, and later a reader for one of the principal London publishers, A cousin of Dircks's, Eustace Charlton, I did not know then, but was to know later as the best and

Ernest Rhys.

FRANCES QUIN

kindest of all my Positivist friends and supporters. The young men who came to me at that time were of the kind that see visions. Some of them, if they saw no greater thing, saw themselves romantically, as men of letters in London, struggling heroically on a crust, and producing masterpieces. One or two of them, as I have said, have actually, in some small degree, entered this heaven.

Rev. Bernard Snell.

Rhys and Dircks, I think, I got to know through a young Congregational minister who was at that time beginning to emerge from obscurity in Newcastle, and who—perhaps because he was a man of unusual knowledge, force and boldness—preached there to a beggarly array of empty benches. This was the Rev. Bernard Snell. I have often heard it said that Newcastle was an excellent place for a man of capacity to get away from, but perhaps this was a slander. Snell, at any rate, left Newcastle, and eventually won high place and distinction as the minister of the Congregational Church, Brixton, and has, I think, been President of the Congregational Union. He was, when I first knew him, a breezy, unconventional personality, decidedly of what would now be called the " Modernist " type. The last time I saw him, however, was in 1912, when he came to speak to me in his church at Brixton, with his tall, muscular frame arrayed, to my surprise, in a surplice. I was the more interested in seeing him thus adorned because, in the thirty years that had elapsed since our first acquaintance, I had myself learnt to wear this vestment—and to discard it.

Changing Fortunes.

My marriage was not the only change in my personal fortunes at that time, for shortly after that event I abandoned my business career, such as it had been, for what then seemed to me the more congenial function of a political secretary. It was a somewhat precarious and unpromising position, and I did not continue in it very long. The chief personal good that I got out of it was that it brought me into somewhat close and friendly relation with John Morley, who was, as is well known, and as he has himself acknowledged in his autobiography, a good deal of a Positivist. I had long been

one of his admiring readers, and I now, as it happened, became his election agent, and helped him to gain his first seat in Parliament. The account of my political work and interests, however, does not fall within the scope of these pages. They are the record of my religious experiences, and my Positivist "apostolate." In the same way, it is not necessary for me to say much here of my purely personal fortunes after I had resigned my secretaryship. For some little time I gained some sort of a subsistence by taking pupils in languages and mathematics. Then I became a journalist. In 1886 a new Liberal newspaper was established in Newcastle called the *Newcastle Daily Leader*. Its editor was my friend James Annand—a man of parts and political ambitions, who won a place in Parliament only to die suddenly before he could actually take his seat. I became a member of the staff of the paper—first as outside contributor and afterwards as assistant-editor and chief leader-writer—and was associated with it for ten years. At the end of that time, as will be seen, I finally turned my back on journalism, and devoted myself entirely to my Positivist work. It is, of course, that work alone—a work which I continuously prosecuted whatever the changes and difficulties of my private life—which gives any interest it may possess to my story.

CHAPTER VII

MY FIRST CHURCH

Two or three of the young men whom I have mentioned were, in some degree at least, won to Positivism—or to Positivism as I presented it to them. The Positivist apostle had, or supposed that he had, a special mission to "women and workmen," but it was not among women or workmen that I actually gained my first adherents. I found them among men of some reading and education, who—in one way or another—had passed from Christianity into "Unbelief." The Positivist bracketing of women and workmen, as if they were somehow necessarily in the same plane of disposition, capacity and education was, in fact, an illusion—one of many which I had to live through and escape from. Our assumption, I suppose, was that women and workmen were especially characterized by "veneration," and were thus pre-eminently apt to receive a new religion and a new spiritual authority. Nothing could be more contrary to my experience. Indeed, Comte himself had constantly to correct his own generous generalizations in the light of his progressive knowledge of individual men and women.

Women and Workmen.

However, these young men of whom I have spoken—the only young woman among them for some time being my wife—gave me such a measure of sympathy and agreement as determined me to enter on a public advocacy of Positivism. Sometime in the course of 1882 we rented a room, called the Cordwainers' Hall, in Nelson Street, and I gave a series of lectures there on Sunday mornings. There must have been some response to this effort, for I decided to continue it in a more permanent form. I had then, however, to

Lectures on Positivism.

consider the momentous question of what that form should be. Dr. Congreve was now, in my mind, my "leader" or director, and I therefore naturally consulted him on the subject. It was for me at least an important one—more important than I could at that time understand. My whole future was, in fact, bound up in it. It had, too, an impersonal importance greater than any that I could then adequately gauge, for, obscure and insignificant as my work was in itself, the issues which it raised were the deepest that the modern religious mind is called upon to face.

Worship and Doctrine.

Dr. Congreve was opposed to a permanent presentation of Positivism by means of lectures only. He had had his experiences. His "School" had become a "Church," although the word Church had not yet finally swallowed up the word School. He had his prayers and a form of service. He held that the new teaching should be associated with a new worship. For this he seemed to have the sanction of Comte. Comte, as I have shown, went on changing his mind to the end of his life, and among other changes that he made, or proposed, was one in the construction of his *Catechism*. As he himself published the book, its exposition of doctrine preceded the exposition of worship, but he shortly afterwards held and said that the exposition of the worship should have come first, and insisted that the change should be made in any future edition of the work. The change was first actually made by Congreve in his English translation of the *Catechism*. It was, of course, of no fundamental importance. The introductory chapters of the book raise almost all the great and difficult questions of religious doctrine according to Positivism, and the exposition of the worship itself is really a part of the doctrine. Theory and practice are different things. Congreve's recalcitrant supporters did not profess disagreement with the teaching of the *Catechism*, which was also the teaching of Comte's *Politique*. What they disagreed with, or disliked, was the actual prayers and ritual which he adopted, in supposed conformity with it.

But, where they disagreed with him I, in principle, agreed with him. When, therefore, he suggested that our lectures in Newcastle should be accompanied by some form of "service," I decided to act on his view. I myself compiled a hymn-book, putting into it some of my own compositions, old and new, along with others. We had "lessons," or readings, from the *Imitation*, or from Moncure Conway's *Sacred Anthology*, or some other book of devotion. We hired an American organ, and my wife played and sang to us, thus beginning a service of voluntary musical ministration which lasted, without interruption, for almost thirty years. It was all a singular experiment. We had almost no congregation, except the two or three young men of whom I have spoken, and some casual visitors, who were attracted by curiosity, and who helped us to sing. But singular experiment though it was, it was, in various ways, significant and decisive. For one thing, although we then hardly realized it, we were setting up a new sect. For another, I was myself burning my boats, and committing myself to an enterprise the development and end of which I could not foresee. A man may give a course of lectures, or a dozen courses, and when they are finished return to his ordinary life and work. He has said what he had to say, and has no further responsibility. When he makes himself, or tries to make himself, the instrument of public worship and the organ of a religious community, it is different. He gives hostages to the future. It is a fatal step—all the more fatal when he stands alone, and has himself to create the forms of worship and the community.

First Positivist Services.

However, I took this fatal step with a light heart—although, of course, it brought immediate work and anxieties. I took it, of course, with the greater confidence because I had Dr. Congreve's sanction and co-operation. Later in this same year, 1882—on October 22nd—he came down again to see me, and lectured in the Cordwainers' Hall. It was his first public appearance in Newcastle. The subject of his address was "The Positive Religion as the Completion of the Older

Congreve and Religious Continuity.

Beliefs." I mention this now because the principle which he thus proclaimed, whether it was sound, or unsound, governed the whole of my own religious work, and because the questions which it raises are just as vital to the world in this year 1924 in which I write as they were forty years ago when Congreve gave his lecture.

Things New and Old in Religion.

In what sense, it may be asked, could the Positive Religion be a completion of the Older Beliefs? Belief, as a word of religion, means, as it is hardly necessary to repeat, "supernatural" Belief. It is belief in a God, the soul, immortality, revealed Scriptures and a Church professing to wield Divine authority. We Positivists believed in none of these things. Our religion, if it was a religion, was avowedly a religion for the "Emancipated"—for Unbelievers. It was a religion, according to Comte's formula, "Without God or King." Comte himself in his *Catechism* called all theological Believers the "slaves of God"—a name which Congreve, in his translation of the work, softened into "servants" of God; but which, curiously enough, I have recently heard bestowed upon them by a preacher in a Roman Catholic Church. How, then, could this religion of Unbelief be the "completion" of the religions of Belief? It could, of course, conceivably continue and develop their practical morals, giving them a new and positive sanction. Such commandments as "thou shalt not kill," "thou shalt not steal," "thou shalt not commit adultery," and "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" have, in themselves, no necessary theological character. They could easily be "taken over" by Positivism. But was this a "completion" of the older Beliefs? As Beliefs it is plain that they could not be completed by Unbelief. It was Congreve himself who, in a controversy with Huxley, defined Positivism as "Catholicism plus Science." The definition was a paradox, and so was the title of his lecture in Newcastle—"The Positive Religion as the Completion of the Older Beliefs." It was a paradox, moreover, that put us in a difficulty; for Believers could not be expected to accept our religion of Unbelief,

and the Unbelievers to whom we appealed could not be expected to accept the religions of Belief.

Paradox or not, however, Congreve's word appealed to me. It was, and it remained, the word of my work. We went on singing our hymns, reading our readings and playing our music, thinking, I suppose, that we were in this way "completing the older Beliefs," although when we came to our preaching of the new there was nothing about Belief in it, but much about "demonstrable" science and philosophy. We were soon dissatisfied with the Cordwainers' Hall, of which we had only possession on the Sundays. Soon after Dr. Congreve's visit to us, we decided, with his concurrence and support, to take a place which we could have to ourselves, and use as a "church." We secured a suitable and pleasant room in Pilgrim Street, the proprietor of which was a Jew. It happened, therefore—as will be seen later—that for my first church I rented a room from a representative of almost the oldest of the "older Beliefs," and that when eventually I was compelled to sell the site of my last church it passed into the hands of adherents of the same Belief and became the site of a Synagogue. There was some sort of relation between the beginning and the end.

Our First Church.

But we did not immediately call our new room a church. On this as on most other points I consulted Dr. Congreve, and was ruled by his view. He himself, as I have said, had passed, or was then passing, from the word "School" to the word "Church," but his recommendation was that we should content ourselves in Newcastle with calling a room a room. Our new place of meeting, therefore, was known as the "Positivist Room." All the same, we considered it, and it was, a church—in so far as any building could be a church which had, except for my wife and myself, no permanent congregation. We decorated it, and transformed it, in some sort, into a typical "Church of Humanity," with the financial help of Dr. Congreve, given from his "Sacerdotal Fund." Round the walls were fixed a series of thirteen

A Positivist Temple.

busts, representing the " Great Types " of Comte's Historic Calendar. Above where the altar should have stood, if we had had one—for we had not yet advanced as far as this symbol—hung a reproduction of the Sistine Madonna, which for us represented, not God in the arms of his Mother, but Humanity. At the opposite end of the room were suspended several mounted sheets, giving Comte's " socialatrical system," his theory of the soul, etc. The " minister's " desk rested on an oblong table, and both were covered with red baize. For the purpose of my " apostolic," or " sacerdotal " function, I wore no robes or vestments, but officiated simply, as Dr. Congreve himself did, in decent black.

This was our first church, of which we took possession in January, 1882. It was a great day for us. It was a hardly less important occasion when, on Sunday, March 4th, Henry Crompton, one of Dr. Congreve's chief supporters at " Chapel Street," came to " preach " or lecture for us. This was the beginning of my long acquaintance and religious association with him. He was the son of a judge, and was himself a barrister, although he did not practise, holding the comfortable office of Clerk of Assize. His wife, with whom I later became acquainted, was a beautiful and interesting woman, and the daughter of another well-known judge, Lord Romilly. She also was a Positivist. Henry Crompton was a man of great personal charm, cultivated, urbane, simple, and of frank, prepossessing manners. He was, too, a man of fine and sympathetic intelligence, who brought to bear on his Positivist work no aggressive zeal, perhaps, but steady convictions, wide knowledge and a capacity for clear and orderly statement. During many years of my Positivist mission, he was often our guest in Newcastle, and my wife and I were the guests of the Cromptons at Churt—a village where Mr. Lloyd George has recently built himself a house. Crompton could be depended on for generous practical friendship and sagacious counsel. His sympathies were with what we now call " Labour," and he gave English trade unionists valuable advice and assistance at a time

Henry Crompton.

when their movement was seriously hampered by legal restrictions.

Plunging into Prayer.

Henry Crompton's first visit to us is, in the chronicle of my religious experiences, important for two reasons. Our services had then only been in progress for a few months, and so far I had not ventured to introduce prayer at them. This was not because I had any doubt as to the Positivist principle of prayer, but simply because I had a sort of *mauvaise honte*—natural, perhaps, in a young and inexperienced layman, facing a critical world—in making myself the instrument of so strange a practice in so strange a religion. When, however, I talked the matter over with Crompton, he at once said to me: "Would you like me to make the plunge for you?" I gladly accepted the proposal, and he accordingly read Dr. Congreve's prayers at our service, as I afterwards continued to do. Crompton's offer was, for a man of his position and training, a gallant proposition. So far as I was concerned, this was only the first of a series of similar "plunges."

Positivist Secessions.

The second reason why Henry Crompton's visit was significant was because it gave rise to the first of a long series of secessions from our little Church. Strictly speaking, perhaps, it was not actually the first, since one of my young "literary" friends had ceased his co-operation with me so soon as it became evident that I was going to set up some form of "service." That, however, might perhaps be called a preliminary omen, rather than a formal secession. Henry Crompton, however, in his "sermon," or lecture, happened to have chosen as his subject "Humanity a Being." This was too much for my friend William Grant. He had hitherto supported me, but he now wrote to say that he could no longer continue his connection with our work. The word "Being" seems, in itself, harmless enough, but Grant was a sturdy Scottish Freethinker, and his view was that our use of it showed a tendency to relapse into "theology." So much for our "completion" of the older Beliefs! Crompton, of course, was only putting forward

Comte's conception of Humanity as a social organism. If one man is a "being," so, it may be supposed, is the universal, indivisible life of mankind, which, says Pascal, "ought to be regarded as a single man, always living and always learning." But this initial secession, at the very commencement of our enterprise, has a double interest—first because it illustrates the perils which we had to face in assigning a positive meaning to "theological," or "metaphysical" terms; secondly, because the record of secessions is a part of the natural history of every Positivist community. I was now beginning to experience what Dr. Congreve and Comte had experienced before me. I dare say I resented these experiences at the time, but such resentment is absurd and useless. The great problem for the modern world is to transform the religion of supernatural faith into a religion of positive demonstration. It is a more difficult and a longer task than we, in our little "Positivist Room," supposed.

Canon Dixon.

As to Humanity—the universal social man—we have, of course, not only Comte's word, and Pascal's, but the word of St. Paul, Shakespeare, Carlyle, Shelley and various others. Comte's conceptions, moreover, have touched minds which were not in the least theologically in agreement with him. We came across a curious instance of this at the time of our early work in our Positivist Room. One of the charming little villages of the Northumberland coast is Warkworth, set on the romantic Coquet, with Shakespeare's Warkworth Castle looking down upon it. My wife and I spent many a pleasant summer holiday there. The vicar at that time was Canon Dixon, a quiet, scholarly man who wrote a well-known *History of the Church of England*, and was also a bit of a poet. He was at one period an associate of the pre-Raphaelites. It happened that a young member of our small Positivist body used to call on him in the way of business, and one day it somehow came out in conversation that he was a Positivist. Thereupon the good Canon insisted on his accompanying him into the study. The young man was alarmed, thinking that the thunders of the Church were about to descend

upon him, but instead he found the Canon very sympathetic with his ideas, and with a surprisingly intimate knowledge of Positivism. I tell this little story partly that I may have an excuse for printing the following sonnet, which is perhaps not commonly known, and which has at least the distinction of being a sort of Positivist poem by an Anglican vicar :—

AN ANGLICAN SONNET OF HUMANITY.

There is a soul above the soul of each,
A mightier soul, which yet to each belongs ;
There is a sound made of all human speech,
And numerous as the concourse of all songs ;
And in that soul lives each, in each that soul,
Though all the ages are its lifetime vast ;
Each soul that dies, in its most sacred whole
Receiveth life that shall for ever last.

And thus for ever with a wider span
Humanity o'erarches time and death ;
Man can elect the universal man,
And live in life that ends not with his breath ;
And gather glory that increases still
Till Time his glass with Death's last dust shall fill.[1]

Lord Robson and Positivism.

Another man who, not being a Positivist, took a certain interest in the beginnings of our Positivist work was W. S. Robson—afterwards Solicitor-General and Lord Robson. He was a Newcastle or a Gateshead man, and was for some years Liberal member for South Shields. If I remember rightly, the present Archbishop of York, before he forsook the Bar for the Church, used to "devil" for him. Robson was a man of ideas, or of idealism, and was personally acquainted with Positivists, including Dr. Congreve and Henry Crompton. His name has quite recently come before the world again, owing to the candidature of his son in the entertaining Berwick election, in which a Conservative wife won the seat, to keep it warm for a Liberal husband. On one Sunday evening at least Robson was among my audience in our little Positivist Room, and he afterwards sent me

[1] *The Service of Man.* Hymn-book of the English Positivist Committee.

the following letter. It is not without a certain interest as showing the way in which the Positivist teaching appealed, or did not appeal, to some thinking men at that time :—

3, Plowden Buildings,
Temple, E.C.
April 27, 1883.

Dear Mr. Quin,

I enclose a cheque for £5 towards the expenses of your Room in Pilgrim Street. I formed the intention of subscribing as I listened to you on the Sunday evening I was there, and I am ashamed to think of how long I have been in carrying that intention into effect. Don't accuse me of indifference, however. The pressure of my work, and my own dreamy laziness, will excuse me from that.

Let me say what pleasure I got both from the tone and substance of your address. It breathed the same spirit I admire so much in your fellow workers, Mr. Crompton and Dr. Congreve, and I felt sorry, after I left you, that in bidding you good-night I said nothing except a few ungracious words about my not being a Positivist, and not agreeing with them.

It is true that, from the point of view of my friends in Chapel Street, I am still a "fetishist." I still believe that natural phenomena supply us with data for a regenerated belief in Divinity, and, above all, in Immortality ; but though I, personally, cannot conceive any sure basis for the government of life apart from those conceptions, and do not believe that a religion which ignores them can have any great aggressive force, that has not prevented me from benefiting greatly by Positivism. Whatever creed may ultimately be chosen by mankind to give expression to its religious spirit, it is certain that the practical and work-a-day side of that creed will rest on the noble conception of Humanity, which Positivists teach. Until that conception becomes familiar in some form or other to the English people, our political reforms are of very little value, and really great social reforms are almost impossible. Hence the importance of your work to those who share only part of your creed ; and hence, also, the enclosed mite.

I feel tempted to write more on this, but I am trespassing on business hours, and delaying the vulpine labours of my profession.

Believe me, dear Mr. Quin,
Yours very truly,
Wm. S. Robson.

Dr. Congreve was for me, from one end of twenty years to the other my " leader " in Positivism—my " ecclesiastical head." I never had any doubt, and have no doubt now,

about his superiority, as a religious thinker and teacher, to all other English Positivists. On the other hand, in popular literary effectiveness he was inferior to some of them, and this kind of effectiveness was not without a certain charm for me at that time. I had, for example, been among the many readers of reviews who had been captivated by Frederic Harrison's brilliant articles; and I was at first somewhat inclined to think that when he separated from Congreve it was possibly because, in certain respects, he took the "broader" view and Congreve the narrower. Perhaps I also thought at that time that I myself represented the right middle view. I, therefore, wanted Harrison to lecture for us, and he agreed to do so, stipulating, however, that there was to be no "service." As it happened, our usual service was in the evening, and he was to speak for us in the morning. I was, consequently, not called upon to surrender anything in principle in acceding to his proposal. His stipulation, however, throws its own light on the attitude of the "Newton Hall" Positivists towards Congreve's institution of worship.

Frederic Harrison.

As I had never seen Harrison, and as I was to meet him at the station, a small difficulty arose as to how I was to identify him. He telegraphed to me that he would be dressed in a certain way, and would be wearing "yellow gloves." I relied most on these distinctive gloves when I looked about for him, but I failed to find any one adorned with such things. Eventually, however, I by some means discovered him, and he then confessed to me that he had changed his gloves *en route*. One or two of my Positivist friends to whom I afterwards mentioned this little incident were much amused at it, and said that it was characteristic of Harrison. Whether it was or not, I do not know, for I never saw him after this visit. He gave us a long and eloquent address, and afterwards spent the evening at my house. He was, too, an occasional correspondent of mine for a number of years, and always a friendly one, as also was Mrs. Harrison. It was she who included several of my hymns in the Newton

Harrison and his Yellow Gloves.

Hall Hymn-book, of which she was the editress, and, as it happened, one of them was sung at her funeral service. But Harrison, brilliant *littérateur* though he was, never seemed to me a man of the same spiritual distinction as Dr. Congreve, although with the " Newton Hall " Positivists, as a body, I had no quarrel. They took their line, I mine.

Professor Beesly.

Another of that body with whom I became acquainted in Newcastle was Professor Beesly. He did not come to lecture in our Positivist Room; he had a vaster audience in the Tyne Theatre, speaking for the new Sunday Lecture Society. But he visited us in our house at Gosforth, and we found him an interesting and friendly man. We had much common ground in politics. He was a steady anti-imperialist and anti-militarist, and when, at a later period, I took a somewhat pronounced and perhaps an audacious line against British foreign policy, I always found him sympathetic and appreciative. Frederic Harrison was apt to succumb occasionally to the pressure of public opinion. I have heard him described as a " social barometer." Perhaps he was too wealthy, and could not pass through the eye of the needle. Beesly, in politics, kept his course. Almost up to the time of his death—especially during the Boer War—he sent me letters of good-will and encouragement. He was not one of the " worshipping " Positivists, but he was a public-spirited and capable citizen.

CHAPTER VIII

POSITIVIST DEVELOPMENTS

A Time of Expansion.

THE early 'eighties were a time of stir and expansion among "religious" Positivists throughout the world. Of this movement it is no exaggeration to say that Dr. Congreve was *fons et origo*. He was the real, if unacknowledged, leader of the French Positivists who had separated from Laffitte because of the defects of his religious direction. He was the head of the London movement which obeyed a similar inspiration. He it was, as I have shown, who attracted my own young enthusiasm; and when an important Positivist development took place in South America, it was certainly in a large degree due to his indirect influence on French Positivism, and received from him countenance and support. Further, in 1880—the year in which I also began my systematic Positivist work—a centre of Positivist religious action was established in Liverpool; and this, too, was the result of Dr. Congreve's initiative, and followed, more or less, the line which he had traced. I am now too old, and have known too many disappointments—perhaps, also, I have come to see too many sides of the great human argument—to venture confidently on social prediction; but I shall say this—that if the Religion of Humanity, as Comte conceived it, is ever to have a place in the future, Congreve must have a high, and a very high, place in its early history.

It was in 1883—the time when we were settling down to work in our Pilgrim Street "Positivist Room"—that I first began to have personal relations with the Liverpool Positivists. The active head of the body was then Dr. Carson, an Irish surgeon who was in practice in Liverpool. I think he had gained a knowledge of Comte's work by inde-

pendent reading, and he became an ardent disciple. It happened that Albert Crompton—a younger brother of Henry Crompton's—was settled in Liverpool as a shipowner, and the two men were not long in becoming acquainted. What was not less important, Carson in this way was brought into relation with Albert Crompton's wife, a woman of singular beauty and charm, and of high spiritual instinct and intelligence. She was, if I remember rightly, a granddaughter of the Dr. Aiken who was at one time a well-known writer, a friend of Priestley, John Howard and Southey. The family also included Mrs. Barbauld and Lucy Aiken, both of them authors of considerable repute in their own day and generation. It was largely because of Mrs. Crompton's inspiration and encouragement that Dr. Carson became a Positivist "apostle." Eventually he gave up his practice, and devoted himself entirely to his religious work, being the first man in Europe since Comte's time to be supported as a religious "minister" by Positivists. Alas they are all long since dead—Carson, Albert Crompton, Mrs. Crompton and others of that time of hope.

Liverpool Positivism.

> They are all gone into the world of light;
> And I alone sit lingering here.

The total number of Positivists—using this word here in reference to "religious" Positivists—was at this time, and has always remained, small; but probably no religious body ever contained so large a proportion of men and women of intellectual capacity differing so profoundly in mind and character. No two men, for example, could have less resembled one another than Dr. Congreve and Dr. Carson. Congreve was measured, discriminating, patient, distrustful of impulse, averse to florid or excessive statement, and with a certain academic demeanour, in spite of his professed dislike for academies He was, too, in temperament, conspicuously "English," although no one was a bolder critic of England, or had a more international mind. Dr. Carson was emotional, impulsive and paradoxical, to the point of being almost quixotic.

Dr. Carson.

If he was not a distinguished man, he was certainly distinctive. He had, I am sure, touches of genius, with a capacity for startling and provocative utterance. The Positivist "synthesis" was undoubtedly for many Positivists a weight which they carried with difficulty. They were somewhat like Rousseau, who said that after he had studied physiology he was almost afraid to sit down lest he should break something, or perhaps a little like M. Jourdain after he had begun to learn things. Carson, while he remained in health, was a generous and buoyant spirit, who converted thoughts into instincts, and philosophy into poetry. Unfortunately, he ran no long course. All that he could do for Positivism was begun and ended within the limits of seven years.

Hymns Theological and Rational.

It was towards the end of 1882 that I began to get into correspondence with him. I had written to him about the hymns in use in the Liverpool Church; and I give part of his reply, because it has a bearing on what I have said as to the difficulty of finding right artistic forms for Positivist services, and the necessity of "going back" for them to Catholicism or Christianity, or to something with a sort of Catholic inspiration. "I send you," he said, "some of the hymns we have used here. Those I send have gradually come——by the process of natural selection, I suppose—to be our generally used ones. . . . We lay under a peculiar disadvantage in choosing hymns at the first. All the warm, poetical ones—those having much colour and human feeling and sympathy—were decidedly theological in language, and to this personally I had a strong objection in principle. Then, hymns free from this, and tolerably humanly pious in thought, we found to be of the cold Unitarian tinge, and very unmoving."

A Prophet of the Proletariat.

It was in April 1883 that Dr. Carson first came and preached to us in Newcastle. He was a somewhat singular figure, clad in a long frock-coat, and looking, what I believe he felt himself to be, every inch a priest. In the pulpit—if that is the right name to give to our modest reading desk—he had certain tricks, or oddities, which a little marred his effective-

ness; but he was a man of ardour and imagination, and when the Muses actually visited him he said things stirring and prophetic. I cannot now recall what he said on this occasion, or afterwards when he came again; but here are some words from a letter of his to me which mark the man, and which have, perhaps, an even greater significance now, in what seems to be the age of the "proletariat," than when Carson penned them: "I want to help to give the Human Religion a right start before I die. *The whole future of man is in it.* I say this after many years of anxious meditation, and some experience of life under widely differing aspects. Yes, sir, the people shall become a *spiritual aristocracy.* The hideous, chaotic levelling which is the only articulate form which thousands of our noble, manly friends can give to their honest fraternal and social impulses is rapidly disgusting the deeper men. Every man to have his share of the *Human Vista.* There you are!"

Carson, as I have said, only lived long enough to give "a start" to the work to which he had pledged himself. What effect a longer experience would have had upon his views and language it is impossible to say. He soon began to drift towards his fatal illness. A certain thing he did, however, which is not without significance. One of the chief festivals of Positivists is the commemoration of Comte's death, on September 5th. Carson sent out a little circular to the members of the Liverpool body, in which he proposed a mode of celebrating this festival. Comte had the habit, after his modest dinner, of eating a piece of dry bread, in order, as he said, that he might always remind himself of those who lacked even that. Carson suggested that on the anniversary of his death Positivists, remembering this, should meet together and eat bread, drinking with it some "simple fluid." Such a practice, so inspired, is tantamount, of course, to a sacramental rite, having an obvious kinship with the chief sacrament of Catholicism. Carson had a religious instinct. He probably felt that right worship demands not merely a symbolic word, or a symbolic vestment, but a central symbolic "action"—to use the term on which Catholicism

A Positivist Communion Rite.

so much insists. He did not live to get beyond this point, and perhaps might never have got beyond it ; but I remember criticisms of him in his later days for haunting Catholic churches, where doubtless he learnt things, as other Positivists have done, without departing from the basic principles of Positivism.

Albert Crompton and his Wife.

The first visit of Dr. Carson to Newcastle was followed, only a month later, by that of Albert Crompton and his wife. I remember going to the station to meet them. I needed no gloves, yellow or other, to enlighten me as to their identity. They revealed themselves, standing expectant side by side on the crowded platform, companions in a beautiful and striking simplicity. Albert Crompton, unlike his brother Henry, was a shortish figure, with a strong, rugged face and—even then, I think—a mass of abundant silver-grey hair. His wife was as I have already described her—a being physically and spiritually beautiful. To see her was to see a revelation of noble womanhood. Some years after her early death, Albert Crompton published a translation called a *Hundred Sonnets of Petrarch*—a piece of work done, as was plain to be seen, in homage to his own Laura. He would not have said, however, in Carlyle's language, that because of her death, " the light of his life was as if gone out." He would have said that it was still shining. He was, when I first knew him, and for many years afterwards, the active head of an important Liverpool shipowning firm, but he kept his spiritual vision clear amidst all the entanglements of business, and after Dr. Carson's death, became a preacher of remarkable originality, force and picturesqueness. He was, without doubt, the ablest religious Positivist I have personally known, after Dr. Congreve. We had our moments of difference, but he showed a trust in me which I shall always gratefully remember, and he was among the best of my Positivist correspondents to the time of his death in 1908.

After these visits of Liverpool Positivists to Newcastle—or perhaps after that of Dr. Carson—my wife and I paid a return visit to them. On this occasion I preached, or

"spoke"—that, I think, was our chosen word—for the first time in the Liverpool Church, which was then, and for long afterwards, situated in Falkland Street, Islington. Religious Positivism, as I have said, was at this period in a state of initial vigour and expansion, and it is perhaps not uninteresting to remember that this vigour and expansion began first in England, which, according to Montalembert—a Catholic and a Frenchman—is the most religious country in Europe. In Liverpool there was already a growing Positivist community, and we were received, then and ever afterwards, with a cordiality which made us feel that the golden age of a new spiritual brotherhood was coming upon us. It was at this time that we first became acquainted with our friends, Mr. and Mrs. Sydney Style, under whose roof in Hope Street we afterwards spent many hours of delightful Positivist intercourse. At a much later date—after the death of Albert Crompton—Mr. Style became the leader of Liverpool Positivism. His wife—a sister of Dr. Lock, for many years Warden of Keble College, Oxford—was, among several remarkable Positivist women whom I have known, easily the most remarkable, in her varied talents and in her personality. But as she is, fortunately, still living and working, I must now say no more of her than this.

A Visit to Liverpool Positivists.

It was in this same year of Positivist development and energy, 1883, that South America—Brazil and Chili, to be more precise—became the scene of a movement which was destined to be the most extensive, and in certain respects the most remarkable, of any in the early history of religious Positivism. When we in England got to hear about it, it gave us all an impulse of new confidence and hope. Among the Brazilians the most prominent leaders were Miguel Lemos and Teixiera Mendes; among the Chilians the saintly and heroic personality of Jorge Lagarrigue was easily first. At a later date, he came to Newcastle, and gave a discourse in our Positivist Room. He could not speak English, but I translated his address from the French, and he took infinite pains to master the English pronunciation, which he did sufficiently to make

South American Positivism.

himself quite intelligible to his audience. He had the true genius of the religious apostle. He was of good social position and culture, but he settled in Paris, and learnt a handicraft—I think that of a bookbinder—at which he worked obscurely and laboriously, in order that he might not have to depend on literature and journalism, although as a man of letters he could certainly have played a brilliant part. He was not, however, destined to play any part long. Like many other young Positivists I have known, he was marked by the fates for an early death. Short as his time of service was, however, he created a distinct and permanent place for himself in a number of minds, and in mine among them.

Brazilian Positivists.

The Brazilian Positivists brought to their cause an enthusiasm and impetuosity which, perhaps, were characteristically "Southern." Like Dr. Congreve, and those who followed his initiative, they had broken away from Laffitte, after a very short connection with him, on account of what seemed to them the inadequacy of his religious conceptions and action. They were, however, not satisfied with separating from him. They pursued him with denunciation and abuse. He was always to them the "sophist Laffitte," or "the sophist of the Sorbonne." He appeared to them to be a disloyal disciple of Comte, and a traitor to the Religion of Humanity. In principle, they were substantially at the same point of view as Dr. Congreve, but in temperament they were very different, and they were all much younger. He was calm and judicial, although active and persevering; they were fiery and unmeasured. But they were also able and energetic, and had soon formed a considerable body of Positivists in Rio, built themselves a "Temple," and provided for the maintenance of two apostles. They did much to develop the Positivist teaching, organization and worship in Brazil, although—so far as my knowledge extended—they did not take the all-important and decisive step of instituting public prayer. In that respect, Dr. Congreve had the perils and the honours of initiative. With some of the Brazilians, as will be seen, I came afterwards to have very cordial

personal relations, although I had my points of disagreement with them.

The Papacy of Paris.

It was the great object of the South American Positivists —as, indeed, of almost all the disciples of Comte—to make Paris in practice what, according to his teaching, it is in principle—the religious centre of the world. They wished it to become the Rome of the New Religion, the seat of a modern Papacy. It was in the prosecution of this purpose that Jorge Lagarrigue entered upon his gallant and ill-fated enterprise. Some time after his death, M. Teixiera Mendes—who, as a consequence of the ill-health of M. Lemos, had then become the active Brazilian leader—tried to establish himself in Paris, but, finding little response there, and that his absence from Brazil was going to have a detrimental effect on Positivism in that country, he eventually decided to return to Rio de Janeiro. While he was in Paris, nevertheless, he succeeded in erecting a " Temple of Humanity " there. It is situated in the Rue Payenne, and stands on the site of the house in which Clotilde de Vaux—Comte's friend and *inspiratrice*, as I have said, during one romantic year—lived and died. It was, when I visited it in 1912, and so far as I know, still is, an empty shrine, without priest or congregation, " religious Positivism," according to the conceptions of Dr. Congreve and the Brazilians, having still no centre in Paris. Comte's disciples there, for the most part, form at the present time, two or three separate and divided bodies, most of them, however, apparently more or less at the point of view of the " Laffittists."

Choice of the Priesthood.

Most of these events were in the future, and some in the distant future, when, in the early 'eighties, I was first occupied in trying to form the nucleus of a Positivist community in Newcastle. But even the beginnings of these developments served to give us encouragement and hope in our work. They made us feel that, few as we were, we were part of a world-wide movement, which was destined ultimately to transform the life of mankind. It was perhaps partly under the influence of such ideas that I decided, in 1884, to ask Dr. Congreve

to consecrate me—" destine " is the technical word—to the Positivist priesthood. Here is his reply on the point, dated January 21, 1885 : " First, let me answer a question of long standing, on which I have thought much, but which I only answer now quite in the general. I shall have great pleasure in conferring the Sacrament of Destination on you for the Priesthood. I expect Cox will take it in June, and the two might unite for that time." In Comte's religious system there are nine " social sacraments "—two more than those of the Catholic Church, but following—with the all-important exception of the Eucharist—more or less the same lines. One of those added by Comte is called the Sacrament of Destination. It is given in principle to men only, at twenty-eight years of age, and is intended to be a religious consecration of the function—the profession or business—which the recipient has chosen. It may be repeated if, after experience, the function chosen is changed.

Training of Positivist Priests.

According to Comte's plan, the candidate for the priesthood—"Aspirant " is his word—is " destined," like any other functionary, as I have said, at twenty-eight. At thirty-five he becomes a " Vicar," and only at forty-two — the age of full maturity in Comte's view—is he a complete " priest." He had not, at the time of his death, decided on a practical scheme for the education of the priesthood, but it was to be of an " encyclopædic " character, embracing, in some way, the seven abstract sciences of mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, sociology and morals. He was prepared, he said, to dispense, in certain cases, with some of these sciences, but he attached a high importance to the three last-mentioned, as well as to mathematics. This scientific training was, in his view, of the greater consequence because the priest, according to his scheme, was to have the duty of teaching each of these seven sciences, in succession, during a period of seven years, in the Positivist School. The members of all grades of the priesthood, including the Aspirants, were to receive a salary, the amount of which Comte, with the thoroughness and exactness which always characterized him, was careful

to fix, according to the money-values of his time. In one important respect, he departed from Rome in his scheme of sacerdotal organization, for he insisted that the Positivist priest ought to be married. On this question, however, as on many others in Comte's teaching, it is necessary to take account of certain changes of standpoint, and qualifications of statement, which it is impossible to do more than refer to here. He held, for example, that a bad marriage was worse than no marriage.

Comte and his Priesthood.

Comte did not live to consecrate any of his disciples to the priesthood. He described himself, as I have mentioned, as " High Priest " (*Grand-Prêtre*), but, in so far as he was a priest at all, the Positivist priesthood began and ended with its founder, although there were two or three of his adherents whom he thought of in connection with this office, and Dr. Congreve was actually " nominated " by him for it. When, therefore, Congreve was called upon to confer the sacrament of destination to the priesthood, he had to begin *de novo*, just as he had had to begin *de novo* in regard to Positivist public prayer. There was no Positivist school for the training of priests and no money for their maintenance, or, if there was, no one, at that time, was prepared to devote it to such a purpose. Dr. Congreve himself—who had done all that was humanly possible to qualify himself intellectually for the priesthood—lived on his own modest means. Further, there was—as I have pointed out in an earlier chapter—not even a settled practical scheme for the education of Positivist priests. There were no text-books of the great sciences, as Comte conceived them—except, perhaps, the mathematical portion of his own *Subjective Synthesis*. The all-important science of morals, in its distinctive character, and as he understood it, had not even been shaped.

Comte's own works, certainly, were a mine of wealth, but they were full of difficulties for his disciples. He had himself discredited his *Philosophy*, and had ended by advising his adherents not to read it. It was right, he said, for him to write it, but not to publish it. He had also

declared that even his *Politique*—"instituting the Religion of Humanity"—had been written from a wrong standpoint, and ought to have been constructed under the presiding influence of morals, rather than of sociology. His *Catechism* had to be transposed after his death. His *Subjective Synthesis* was unfinished. His opinions, to the very last—if I may repeat, in a new connection, what I have already said—were undergoing important changes, and his disciples were divided in purpose and conviction.

The Positivist Scriptures.

It was under conditions such as these, and in such an atmosphere, that I decided to become a candidate, or an "Aspirant," to the Positivist priesthood. It is forty years since. To me, I suppose, it meant something. It meant, at any rate, a conscious and voluntary dedication of myself to the service of the religion which I had embraced. Apart from this purpose of self-consecration, however, it is clear that the acceptance of such a priestly office, under such circumstances, could mean little. It was at best a symbolic, or prophetic, act. I was thirty years of age. I was married. Since the resignation of my political secretaryship, I had had to depend for my income on taking pupils. I was at this time actually a Positivist "apostle," having an embryo church and congregation, with the consequent responsibility of delivering weekly discourses, and developing my services and "propaganda." So far as my Positivist studies were concerned, I had every inclination to extend them, for they represented in substance, as I have tried to show in an early chapter of this story, much the same ideal as I had spontaneously embraced when a boy, and had, in degree, continued to pursue. But, in this respect, I could only go on doing what I had always done. Dr. Congreve had himself taken a medical degree, but he wrote to me that it was "not necessary," and it would, in itself, of course, bring in no income. Even if it had been desirable, however, I had neither the means nor the freedom of life for a prolonged course of medical study.

A Symbolic Priesthood.

How far Dr. Congreve had given their due weight to

these various considerations I do not know. I found him invariably sympathetic and considerate, and he warned me more than once against excessive intellectual labour. But he was, I think, on the one hand, exceedingly anxious to make some attempt to establish the Positivist priesthood, while, on the other, he was without the financial resources and the body of spiritual co-operation which were necessary for the success of such an attempt. In his letters to me he constantly lamented the insecurity of his "Sacerdotal Fund," and the narrow and shifting basis on which it rested. He might have said, with a variation on Louis XIV, "*l'Église Positiviste, c'est moi*"; and certainly, for all practical purposes, he was "the church" to me, as I myself was "the church" in Newcastle. But I ought, in strict justice, to say something else. Dr. Congreve, able and wise as he was, had, when he destined me to the priestly office, made no attempt, and he made no attempt afterwards, to convert Comte's large conceptions and abstract phrases concerning the education of the priesthood into a course of practical study. It was a difficult thing to do. Taking a medical course, according to the ordinary conceptions of medicine—which were not Comte's—was, as Congreve himself said, no solution of the problem. "I have risen above medicine," said Comte, "as I have risen above science and philosophy." Actually, M. Pierre Laffitte, in spite of the abuse often bestowed upon him, made, in his *Cours de Philosophie* and other works, a greater contribution than any other of Comte's disciples to the theoretic foundation of a Positivist School.

Congreve and the Priesthood.

When, therefore, Dr. Congreve conferred on me the sacrament of destination to the Positivist priesthood, all that he could do, and all that he actually did, was to perform a certain ceremony and then leave me to myself. To represent the situation summarily, and stripped of all its illusions, there was, in actual fact, no church, no school, no teacher, no text-books, no practical guidance, no money, and no possibility for me, as a consequence, to do any more than I was already doing. That was not Dr. Congreve's fault. The situation governed

The Positivist Trinity.

him, as it governed me. He did all that he could. When, however, I consulted him about these matters, he said: "Consider the Positivist Trinity, and ask yourself how much you know about it." By the Positivist Trinity is meant Space, the Earth and Humanity. It is a sort of symbolic expression and condensation of all human experience and knowledge. In terms of science, Space means mathematics, embracing the calculus, geometry and mechanics; the Earth means astronomy, physics and chemistry; Humanity means biology, sociology and morals. The Positivist Trinity, therefore, is equivalent to man and the universe, with the gods eliminated. To me this simple formula of the human soul and its infinite environment has always, like most of Comte's formulas, seemed steadying and illuminating; but it is plain that to know the Positivist Trinity scientifically was to possess all knowledge. Dr. Congreve's advice to me on this point was therefore not in practice helpful. He left me, as I have said, to find out my way for myself, and follow it at my own risk and peril.

The First "Church of Humanity."

I did not, however, I suppose, see all these things then as I see them now; and, in August 1885, I went contentedly up to London to receive the "Sacrament of Destination" at Dr. Congreve's hands, in his Chapel Street Church. My earliest visit to this room had been in the previous year, when I attended some sort of a Positivist conference there. I remember I got a chill of disappointment as I first saw it. What kind of an ecclesiastical edifice I had expected to find I do not know. What I actually saw, so far as the outside was concerned, was what looked like an image-maker's, or phrenologist's shop, with a small projecting sign, on which were the words, "Church of Humanity." The images in the window were really the plaster busts of the Positivist Calendar exposed for sale. I am afraid I made some criticial comments on this unprepossessing exterior of the first "Church of Humanity" in the world's history. Eventually, owing to Henry Crompton's generosity, the premises were remodelled, and the "shop" was taken away.

Within the Sanctuary.

The Room inside—the actual "church"—was a fair-sized, oblong and comfortable apartment. It was adorned with the customary Positivist busts, representing the chief historic types of Comte's calendar, and beneath them were prints or photographs of the subordinate types. Taken together, I think, they formed a unique collection. At the end of the room hung a reproduction of the Sistine Madonna. Near it was a small organ, enclosed within a curtain. I cannot be quite sure but I think there was then no "altar"; I believe it came later. The service was on Sunday mornings. There was, as I have said, no hymn-singing, but there was agreeable organ-playing. The congregation did not kneel for prayer, but it was serious and decorous. It was, too, eminently respectable. George Jacob Holyoake, the Secularist leader, after a visit to the church of the Liverpool Positivists, said, in his whimsical way, "the men in this society would not beat their wives." It was meant, I suppose, as a generous tribute. Certainly, no one would have expected the men of Dr. Congreve's church to beat their wives, or do any other desperate deed.

Legends of "Chapel Street."

"Chapel Street," as we always used to call this modest church, was, as was natural, the occasion of various legends and jokes among the non-Positivist ungodly—or perhaps the godly. It is the fate of rising and dying religions to be ridiculed. I think we Positivists did not much resent these jokes. We jested with the jesters. Some one who visited this first Positivist church declared that he did not see much difference between it and an ordinary Anglican church; "and," he said, "to complete the resemblance I found Lord Houghton there, fast asleep." This Lord Houghton was, of course, Richard Monckton Milnes, the biographer of Keats, and the "Cool of the Evening" of Mid-Victorian society. Another critic, taking advantage of the small number of English Positivists, and the dissensions among them, said that "they went to Chapel Street on a certain day in one cab, and came away in two." A third humorist, also profiting by the scanty congregation, affirmed that there were "three persons, but

no God." A small church, however, is fair game for a large church, or for those who are of no church; and I believe we all bore these and similar sayings pretty good-humouredly.

A Positivist Conference.

At the Positivist Conference which I attended at Chapel Street in 1884, there were representatives present from Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham, Leicester and perhaps one or two other places. The Leicester representative was my old friend, George Findley. I was housed on this occasion by the Congreves, and have retained a pleasant impression of Dr. Congreve in the midst of his books, and of Mrs. Congreve's graceful, old-fashioned courtesy. This was not my first acquaintance with her, as she had already paid one or two visits to Newcastle. Of her also it may be said that she was a distinctive, if not a distinguished personality. She belonged, in certain respects, to an earlier age in social culture and manners. She was stately and precise, with an utterance so measured and careful as to be almost pedantic. She and her husband were great lovers of Jane Austen, and in certain respects she might almost have stepped out of the pages of *Emma* or *Mansfield Park*. But she had also the intellectual boldness of the new age. She was an adherent of Positivism who had a knowledge of its philosophy. She was an intimate friend of George Eliot—coming, I think, from the same county—and when the novelist associated herself permanently with George Henry Lewes, the Congreves were the first persons to call on them, and give them social support. Some of Mrs. Congreve's letters to George Eliot will be found in Cross's *Life*. She and her husband were a remarkable pair. People whom they visited used to say that it was a "waste" to have them together, as each alone was so interesting.

Thomas Sulman.

Among the London Positivists, whom I then met for the first time, was Thomas Sulman, a warm-hearted and enthusiastic artist, whose book-illustrations are still to be found in works of that period, and who was occasionally numbered among Positivist preachers. "The preachers of Positivism," a friend of mine somewhat cynically said to me once, "out-

number the congregation." But Sulman preached a scientific religion with more than scientific fervour. I have sat with him on more than one occasion in his house at Church End, Finchley, while he was busy making sketches for the illustrated papers, and talking copiously and energetically at the same time about the new gospel. He was the able father of able children. He has been long numbered among the dead, and the time came when I had to preach a sort of funeral sermon for him in Newcastle.

C. Kegan Paul.

Dead, too, is C. Kegan Paul, the well-known publisher, whom also I became acquainted with on the occasion of my first visit to Dr. Congreve's church. He was an old personal friend, and I think, a personal convert, of Congreve's, and, like Congreve himself, had at one time been an Anglican clergyman. Then he became a Positivist, and wrote things, in prose and verse, under the inspiration of his new religion. I remember that at this first Positivist conference there was a question of what individual Positivists ought to do—whether we were to act on our own account, or to have "tasks" assigned to us by Dr. Congreve. Kegan Paul was in favour of "tasks." He himself preached at Chapel Street, and other Positivist meeting-places, on several occasions, and in 1885 wrote to me giving a very cordial acceptance of my invitation to do the same thing in Newcastle. Something at the time prevented his coming, and when, in 1888, I renewed my invitation, he replied telling me that his mind was then in a state of doubt concerning religious questions, and that, under the circumstances, he felt he had better not preach for me. As a matter of fact, not long after this, he was received into the Catholic Church. He has himself told this story in his autobiography, and how, walking across the Park to "Chapel Street," he questioned and re-questioned his mind about Positivism. He has not there given his letter to me, however, and as it is not without a certain small historic interest, I print it here.

KEGAN PAUL AND POSITIVISTS.

1, Paternoster Square.
January 17, 1888.

Dear Mr. Quin,

Your kind letter of invitation prevents my saying only, "I am sorry that I am unable to go to Newcastle," and obliges me to say a little more. For a year past I have been drifting into a quite unexpected frame of mind in regard to Positivism. With its historical and social views I am as completely in sympathy as I have ever been, and with all the religious side of its view of man. But at the same time theology has resumed greater sway over me than I thought was ever possible again, and I am in a strait between two tendencies which effectually bars me from lecturing or preaching. I should not be honest to my hearers or to myself. I do not at all know in which direction the bias of my mind may ultimately show itself to be; I am content to wait. In the meantime, I am not talking about the matter, but I felt bound to give a reason for not accepting an invitation to which, at the time of our last correspondence, I looked forward with pleasure and hope.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
C. Kegan Paul.

Positivist Congregations.

This letter, if it has no other value or importance, throws light on the pathos of Dr. Congreve's long attempt to build a "Church of Humanity," and on the kind of materials with which he had to work. Kegan Paul's, of course, was not the only instance of a conversion from Positivism to Catholicism. A son of Frederic Harrison's, for example, followed the same course. But Dr. Congreve's dissenters were not all drawn to Catholicism. Dr. Blake, as I have said, repudiated, on professed Positivist grounds, the prayers and ritual which he had set up. One lady of his congregation, who wrote a Positivist novel, afterwards became a Christian Scientist. Another lady married a Baptist minister near Newcastle, and when I invited her to come and hear Dr. Congreve preach, wrote to me that she now much preferred her husband's sermons. Of the children born into my own congregation, one has grown up to be an Anglican clergyman, and another a member of the Anglican Church, while others take no interest whatever in religion in any shape or form. Ours is an age of a vast

ebb-and-flow of mind. Men move from Protestantism and Unbelief to Catholicism, while others move from Catholicism to Protestantism and Unbelief. Some embrace Catholicism and then leave it. Mrs. Besant was first an Anglican, then a Secularist, and then a Hindu. I have myself known a capable Englishman, the energetic head of a large business establishment, who ceased to be a Freethinker, and became a "Vedantist." On the other hand, I have also known Hindu Positivists and Freethinkers.

A Positivist Ordination.

When, in August 1885, I paid my second visit to the London Church of Humanity, to be made an Aspirant Positivist priest, I was, I think, not greatly concerned with speculations of this order. We were at the beginnings of things, and were all pretty hopeful. As it happened, I was not alone in receiving this Sacrament of Destination to the Positivist priesthood. My colleague was a young fellow named Homersham Cox, a Cambridge man of some mathematical distinction. He had published a little treatise on arithmetic, done from the point of view of the mathematics of Comte's *Subjective Synthesis*. Some other work of his had won the notice of the British Association. His father was a county court judge, who got himself into much disfavour in Wales by some caustic comments on the veracity of Welsh witnesses. Harold Cox, a brother of Homersham's, has gained some place and fame in the world as the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, and as, I think, a Unionist Free Trader. There were some tall and handsome sisters of the Coxes, one of whom, I think, married Thornycroft, the sculptor, and another Sydney Olivier, who was one of the authors of *Fabian Essays in Socialism*. He has since become a successful State servant, and is now a Cabinet minister in a Labour Government, and one of its first peers.

The handsome Cox girls were moving about the Chapel Street Room on the morning when their brother Homersham and I received the Sacrament of Destination to the Positivist priesthood. What became of him after this ceremony I do not know. I had, I think, one or two letters from him, but he then disappeared completely and finally from the

Positivist stage, and I never heard of him as figuring on any other. What the explanation of this was I cannot say. Such things have not wholly been uncommon in my experience. Some years after this event I got into correspondence about Positivism with a man in Edinburgh, who had a professional position, and some education. He appeared a most promising convert, and when I went to Edinburgh I visited him. He read all the things I sent him to read, including our service forms and forms for admission to the Church, and professed himself hugely contented. He then came to Newcastle to be formally made a member of the Positivist body—a rite which was duly performed, apparently to his satisfaction. After this, however, I never saw him, or heard from him, again. I think, perhaps, our "ritual," when it was actually beheld, was an affront to his Scottish soul. Things similar to this, however, are not unknown outside Positivism. A Primitive Methodist minister told me, not long ago, that when he was a young man he was voluntarily confirmed in the Anglican Church, but that something in the church, or in churchmen as he saw them, was so alien to him that after the ceremony he ceased to be an Anglican.

A Vanished Positivist Priest.

In becoming an "Aspirant" to the Positivist priesthood, I had myself entered on a position, the difficulties of which I could only fully measure by degrees. With the question of the course of study I have already dealt. Another difficulty was the old and vulgar difficulty of an income. I was then dependent on my teaching work, but I had still, in spite of my Positivism and Dr. Congreve's earnest advice to me not to become a "writer," some surviving literary ambition. After my retirement from my political secretaryship I consulted John Morley about this, and he was kindness itself to me, promising me his valuable help. He was at that time still editor of the *Fortnightly Review*. I told him that if I wrote anything, it would be with the intention of expressing "Positivist views." In his reply to this, dated November 18, 1884, he said: "Your position is an extremely difficult one. Literature means journalism, pure and simple, unless

John Morley on Positivism.

you chance to have the gift—for it is that, and is hard of acquisition—of exceptional expression. Even then, unless you are a novelist, the fruit is very meagre. But *try*; that is the first thing. Positivist views—yes, if you like; but not Positivist *dialect*; it is hated by men and editors. I hope you will have the time, a sufficient time, for the better kind of writing, such as will enable me to be of the service that I should desire."

An Unpublished Article.

I was sufficiently encouraged by this to write an article—an attempt at a philosophical estimate, if I remember rightly, of the functions of a Radical party—and send it to Morley. This was what he said after receiving it.

BERKELEY LODGE,
WEST HILL, PUTNEY, S.W.
September 1, 1885.

DEAR MR. QUIN,

I only returned on Friday night last from a month's flight in Switzerland, and I found your letter and MS., with a mountain of others, awaiting me.

As you may have seen in the papers, my editorial position is at an end—for the present at any rate. I only bring out one more number, and that is already made up. My successor, I believe, is not going to meddle with politics, and therefore it will not be of much use to forward the article to him. I will, if you like, send it on to either the *Contemporary* or the *F.R.*, both of whose editors are known to me.

The article is written with remarkable point and finish, and its literary power—if you will not be hurt at my frankness—is rather a surprise to me. I don't know that I disagree with the drift of it. But you must form a great Radical school before you will get a strong and convinced Radical party; and schools are inspired from studies, not in societies.

I go to Newcastle next week to lay my plans. Will you be there? I retain your article until I hear from you.

Yours sincerely,
J. MORLEY.

The end of it all was that I wrote to Morley, asking him not to take any further trouble about placing my article, and to return it to me. My mind, in the meantime, had been at work upon questions connected with the position

which I had recently assumed on becoming a sort of Positivist priest. Comte's counsel to his disciples was to abstain entirely from co-operation in journalism, in any shape or form. Dr. Congreve was strong on the same side, and my own reflections soon led me to a similar conclusion. It is a conclusion which, as I have already said, a good many Positivists have not converted into a rule of life; but I personally felt that having to proclaim a new discipline, I must at least honour it by conforming to it as far as possible. After this, therefore, I made no more incursions into "literature." I even felt bound to refuse an invitation which Professor Beesly once made to me to have a piece of writing of mine published in the *Positivist Review*. I was in this matter, I suppose, an absolutist, or a purist. Almost immediately after my small transaction with Morley, I was, as it happened, forced into journalism by the necessity—if it is a necessity—of making a living; but I always, rightly or wrongly, drew a distinction between what I felt myself compelled to do for bread-and-butter, and what I did from my own free choice. Voluntarily, from this time onward, I wrote no more "articles" for a good thirty years.

A Renunciation of "Literature."

CHAPTER IX

MY SECOND CHURCH

DURING my ten years of journalism I was, of course, also steadily occupied with my "apostolic" work. The amount and variety of effort which it required were almost in inverse proportion to its apparent results. Much had to be done; little was to be seen. So long as we remained in our Pilgrim Street "Positivist Room," I went quietly on, developing, I suppose, in thought as I developed in external experience, but making no great change in forms of worship or modes of action. Our audience, or congregation, was almost uniformly small—except, perhaps, when we had Dr. Congreve, or some Positivist of more or less public distinction, to speak to us. Then we made a special advertising effort, and got a bigger company of listeners together. This, I suppose, is a common experience of "churches." The new voice gains new attention; the preacher whom they have always with them is considered "poor." However, the effect of my continuous work was that we gradually formed a small nucleus of some who might have been called "converts," or "adherents," although it would never have been wise to measure their conversion, or adhesion, by any definite tests. Two or three of them, nevertheless, were young men of intelligence and promise. Unluckily, Death, the great anti-Positivist, took them from us in the course of a few years.

Journalist and Apostle.

In 1887, after we had been for four years in the Pilgrim Street Room, we took what was, for a small and experimental congregation, a bold step—we bought a piece of land in St. Mary's Place, and an iron church to set upon it. The land we purchased through a building society; the church Dr. Congreve enabled us to acquire by a grant from

his Fund, the understanding being that this capital sum was to take the place of the rather considerable annual payment which he had hitherto made to us on account of rent. Our iron building had previously been an Anglican church, and we became the possessors, for a comparatively modest sum, of the whole stock-in-trade—benches, pulpit, lectern, stalls, altar, font, bell and various other furnishings. The bell we did not need, and after some time we sold it. The font, similarly, we did not use. The altar, such as it was, was an important acquisition. It was not a white elephant. Dr. Congreve, as it happened, had by this time added an altar to his "Chapel Street" symbols, and I, therefore, felt warranted in doing a similar thing. He found a sort of argumentative sanction for his symbol in a reference to the "altar of the country." I was not greatly concerned with this argument. I believe I had then come to feel that our altar needed no such justification. I put it in its place, and slowly but surely, it helped to educate me. It was another step forwards, or backwards, towards a "positivized" Catholicism. There are sermons in stones, and books in the running brooks; but an image in a church, or even an oblong wooden table covered with cloth, may also seem to be a voice of truth to us.

Buying a Church.

Comte in his *Catechism* seems to anticipate a time when all the Christian churches, one by one, will "fall into desuetude," and Positivists will take possession of them. So far, this has not happened, but, as a matter of fact, such changes have actually taken place in the course of the many-sided and progressive movement of Humanity. In any case, our humble building in St. Mary's Place was the first Christian temple to be converted to Positivist uses, although, of course, it only became ours by ordinary prosaic purchase, and because its Anglican owners had erected a permanent edifice in its stead. It was we who had the cast-off clothes. The time came when I, by a sort of ironic compensation, had to sell a Positivist church to Christians, without so good an excuse. This, however, was far from our thoughts when,

Christian and Positivist Churches.

on Sunday, May 8, 1887, we opened our new spiritual home in St. Mary's Place. It was a great day for us—the greatest, perhaps, in every sense except the essential sense of religious strength and development, that had occurred since Comte's death in the history of Positivism. We had three services—morning, afternoon and evening. The preacher in the morning was Dr. Congreve, and in the evening Albert Crompton, from Liverpool.

A Positivist Sacrament.

The afternoon service was held to confer one of Comte's sacraments, the "Sacrament of Presentation" on our infant daughter. Dr. Congreve performed the ceremony. It was, of course, intended by Comte to take the place of the Catholic rite of Baptism, but there was no baptism, properly so-called—that is to say, there was no sprinkling. We had our second-hand font, as well as our second-hand altar, but we did not use it. We had, however, our sponsors, and Comte meant the sponsorship to be a real social institution—providing the new-born child with a supplementary father and mother, accepting for themselves, definite material and spiritual responsibilities. We were fortunate in our sponsors. Readers of Comte's correspondence will remember his letters to one of his disciples named Edger, then living in New York. One of Mr. Edger's children was named Sophie, after Comte's faithful servant and adopted daughter, and Comte himself became sponsor for her. It was this "god-child" of Comte's—grown up to be a cultivated and charming woman, and married to an English medical man named Nicholson—who, in her turn, became a sponsor for our daughter. Comte, again obeying his Catholic instincts, prescribed, for the most part, a Catholic choice of baptismal names, and said that they ought to be selected after consultation with the priest. We followed his counsel in both respects, and with Dr. Congreve's approval chose the name of Genevieve for our daughter. When our son was born we named him Basil Godfrey. "Strange names these," said our friend, Dr. Nicholson, cynically shrugging his shoulders, "for a religion 'without God or King!'"

In this iron church in St. Mary's Place we remained for

nearly eighteen years, and did, or tried to do, a good deal of work in it. One of our first problems was what to call it. Any problem, I suppose, may become difficult, if we allow it to assume undue proportions in the mind. Comte intended the word "positive," among other things, to mean "precise." He himself inclined to use the word church, or *église*, especially to denote the *ecclesia*, the congregation, or society of the faithful. For the actual building, he seemed to prefer the term "temple." I never greatly liked, and I am not sure that I even now like, this word. It is pagan, or it is Jewish, or it is Protestant. I consulted Dr. Congreve about the matter, and meant, as always, to be ruled by his decision. He pronounced for the word "church." Then another question presented itself which would not have arisen if we had not been Positivists. Comte, who thought of everything, thought of that problem of a universal language which since his time has much exercised men's minds, and given rise to several new manufactured languages. But he did not believe in a manufactured language. He held that the sacred and universal language of the future would best proceed from one of the languages of the past, duly developed and completed. For this purpose, he chose Italian. I wanted our Church notice-board to be a symbol, or perhaps a prophecy, showing the relation of Positivism to the religions past and future. I, therefore, with Dr. Congreve's concurrence, put on it the following inscription :

Naming a Church.

Ædes Humanitatis
Church of Humanity
Chiesa dell'Umanità

For twenty years or more this strange legend stared the good people of Newcastle in the face, but I never heard that it inspired the slightest curiosity, or that a single question was ever asked concerning it. Ours is an age of "crank" sects and churches, and I suppose this little new Newcastle body was reckoned among the number. Certainly the men and women who came to us—for a considerable time at least—might, for the most part, have been included among

Falstaff and his Followers.

" cranks." They came and they went. We had, for a good while, no definite " adhesions," but some at least adhered enough to give them a basis for secession. Soon after we opened our new building, one excellent man, who had been with us from the first, sent me a letter, saying he could not come any more because ours was now " too much like an ordinary church." Another man joined us and deserted us, and then re-joined us and again deserted us over a period of years, finally leaving us, with the remark that if he came any more, he was afraid he would be " drawn in." I used, at this time, to compare myself and my strange congregation—too cynically, I am afraid—to Falstaff, marching with his troop of soldiers near Coventry. Two of them were men who had been prominent Newcastle Spiritualists. They told me quaint tales about Spiritualism—one, I remember, of how Mr. Eno, the inventor of the well-known fruit-salt, could call a cab from the ranks, while his back was turned towards them, by a " telepathic " message to the cabman. This story is quite good enough for the members of the " Psychical Research " Society, and so I make them a present of it.

The Futility of Miracles.

These two Spiritualist, or Spiritist, men, were with us for some years. I asked them once how it was that they cared to come to a Positivist Church. Their answer, perhaps, has its value for some who are neither Spiritualists nor Positivists. They said they were as much convinced as ever of the reality of Spiritualistic " phenomena," but they saw, all the same, that human life, in all its departments, had to be carried on on a basis of positive knowledge and action, and they therefore came to the conclusion that they might as well be members of a Positivist Church. It has been said that " miracles do not happen." What is hardly less important is that they do not work. The good miracle-worker of the New Testament did not, unluckily, leave behind him his magic of feeding or healing, and even he, if the Gospel stories are to be believed, sometimes found it fail him. We have to do these things as well as we can, with the slow labour of our minds and hands. The one office left to the Catholic Church

in the modern world is to keep men, if it can, out of Hell and send them to Heaven—an important office, certainly, for those who believe in it. Spiritualism, on the other hand, seems to have no other mission than to give its adherents a belief in "immortality"—or at least in "survival after death"—which the world already possessed without it.

Types of Anarchy.

The course of my work during many years brought me, as was natural, into relation with all sorts and conditions of men. I have come into personal contact with men of almost every religious sect, Christian and non-Christian, who, having been "Believers," had become "Unbelievers"—Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, Congregationalists, Irvingites, Quakers, Unitarians, Jews, Mohammedans, Hindus and Buddhists. They were all caught up into the vast, uncertain movement which, as it seems, is carrying man from an old order of ideas to a new. Of course, such men naturally tend to become "cranks"—Spiritists, Christian Scientists, Vegetarians, Single-taxers, or the like. Something must fill the mind, in place of what filled it before. A good friend of mine who became a rabid vegetarian declared that I was "worse than a drunkard" because I ate meat. I felt that I could only cure him by agreeing with him. I, therefore, with my wife's consent, became a vegetarian for six months, and at the end of that time we all, rightly or wrongly, returned to our flesh-pots. Some of the vegetarians were exclusive devotees of "uncooked fruit." One man preached the gospel of anti-salt. He said eating salt made us bald, and that after having lost all his hair through taking it, he had gained an abundant crop by discontinuing it. *Tot homines, quot sententiæ.* But these were not opinions only; they were faiths. The men who held them were of the temper of those Quakers of the seventeenth century who went about naked.

"Your materials are disorder; with them you have to construct order" is a sentence which Comte quoted with approbation, as a watchword for the Positivist apostle. Amidst the flotsam and jetsam of the modern religious revolution I—being myself a part of it—had to do what I

could to bring men into that state of complete order, or unity, which is called the Religion of Humanity. It was a many-sided task. It is not simply a question of "good feeling," as some of my excellent Positivist friends seemed to think. It is a question of good reason. A Christian may have as much good feeling—right love for his fellow man—as a Positivist. The fundamental difference between Christianity and Positivism is, as I have already said, an intellectual difference—the difference between one way of interpreting the universe and another. At bottom this difference resolves itself into the difference between Belief and Demonstration. Positive religion is, in principle, demonstrable religion.

The Task of the Apostle.

My chief difficulty, from first to last, was always to persuade the "Unbelievers" amongst whom I worked to accept the Positivist principle of prayer. This was not in the least because—as I may then sometimes in my impatience have thought—they did not "want" to accept it. The difficulty, as I have already shown, was in the nature of things. It seems, on the face of it—in spite of the example of Buddhism—the most obvious thing in the world that a religion without "a God" cannot have a place for prayer, even if it can rightly be called a religion at all. The words prayer and God not only appear to be, but actually are, correlatives. If you dismiss the one from your vocabulary, you dismiss the other. You may be entitled, on grounds of reason and science, to dismiss, or retain, them both, but you cannot be entitled, on such grounds, to dismiss the one and retain the other. If one of them ought, in reason and science, to be preserved, so ought the other; and if both cannot be so preserved, neither can. There is only one rational escape from this dilemma, and that is, to analyse and positivize the conception of God as you analyse and positivize the conception of prayer. Then you may have a sanction for retaining them both.

Prayer and God.

This, as will be seen, is what I ultimately did. For a good many years of my apostolate, however, I did not master this principle, and I went on with my task burdened with a glaring paradox or contradiction—on the one hand

boldly flaunting Comte's formula: "reorganization without God"; and on the other, insisting on the all-importance of prayer. Somehow, as it seemed, I gradually won over a certain number of men, and a few women, to an apparent acceptance of this paradox. But their acceptance of it was seldom real and complete. It stirred in them no depth of feeling. It was not, in the right sense of the word, a "conversion." Although I was never possessed of the arts of a popular orator, I found myself able in Newcastle and various other towns of England and Scotland, to attract audiences to hear lectures on Positivism; but that, commonly was the end of it. It was rarely that the new doctrine was embraced as a new worship and a new life. To the end, if I asked people to tell me candidly what brought them to our Church, I almost always got the same answer: "the lectures." That was a disappointment to me. I wanted them to love the worship, as I myself loved it, worship being, in my view, the secret and centre of religion. Of course, I am speaking of my own experience. Others may have had a different and a happier one. But I think not.

Lectures and Worship.

With some sort of lectures, and some sort of worship, however, I went quietly and steadily on in the St. Mary's Place Church till the end of 1895. By that date I had formed a small congregation which was certainly of a higher type than the "Falstaffian" troop of which I have impudently made mention. I had done this, as I have said, while continuing my journalistic work, such as I have described it. But about this time I found that there was a disposition on the part of some Positivist friends of mine in Liverpool to enable me to give up this work, and devote myself exclusively to my religious service. I consulted them about it and they consulted me. Eventually I decided to accept the small income which it was proposed to secure for me, and to give the whole of my life to my "apostolate." But I did not do this without considerable hesitation and searching of heart. For one thing, Dr. Congreve, my kind and wise leader, was against

An Apostolic Stipend.

it—not, as he was good enough to say, because he had any doubt as to my title to such a mark of confidence, but largely out of consideration for me personally. He was afraid that such a position would impose upon me undue strain and difficulties of one kind or another. Then, too, there was a certain friction, a certain difference of feeling and outlook, between him and the Liverpool Positivists which made him, rightly or wrongly, critical of any independent action taken on their initiative. Moreover, I was, as I always remained, his pupil and spiritual subordinate. Still, when the arrangement was finally made, he acquiesced in it, and gave it his financial support.

A second reason why I naturally hesitated about entering on this new position was that it involved a material sacrifice. That may be a small thing for the apostle. He has his vision and cause—the inspiration and joy of his service. Even its difficulties and disappointments are of a kind that calls forth his courage and resource. But it may be a great thing for those dependent on him. History has told us much about martyrs and heroes; it has told us less about their wives and children, when they happened to have any. They have had a large share in the suffering or achievement, but not in the honour. When I gave up my journalistic work, I was forty-two. If I turned my back upon it, I could never hope to resume it again. As a matter of fact, when I consulted some of my friends who proposed to provide me with an income, they agreed, as I agreed myself, that I ought in future to entirely abandon it, as a resource. This was especially the view of the most eminent of them. The Positivist apostle, indeed, who tries to carry out the strict rule of Comte, works in a sepulchre—"the world forgetting, by the world forgot." The hardships of his service, however, if there are any—he has at least chosen with his eyes open, while they may fall in greater degree on those who have accepted them, but not chosen them.

Material Difficulties.

Some sense of all these things, I feel sure, was in Dr. Congreve's mind when he gave his voice against, rather than for, my acceptance of the situation on which I entered

towards the end of 1895. He had the habit of being right. He knew the little Positivist world better than I even then could know it. It was a house divided against itself. There was, as I have shown, no Church. Everything was in the experimental stage—worship, teaching, organization. There was, for practical purposes, no common belief. There was no commonly-accepted authority, doctrinal or administrative. There was only the library of Comte's conflicting volumes; and we were left—to use his own words—to our "free efforts" in the interpretation and application of them. Under such circumstances, the apostle who made himself monetarily dependent on his fellow "Positivists," took his fate in his hands. He might at any moment lack not only the means of service, but the means of subsistence. This, in fact, had been the position of Comte himself—the greatest of Positivist apostles. There were moments in his later life when he was unable to publish his works, and others when he was on the brink of starvation. Such perils are all the greater if the mind of the apostle, like Comte's own mind, undergoes developments. They are greater still if, as is inevitable, he makes mistakes in word or action. I, as it happened, was more fortunate than my master, for I had at least some friends who gave me a generous support when they agreed with me, and a not less generous indulgence when they thought me wrong. Still, before I had done, I had some reason to know the difficulties of a spiritual mission in an age in which the spirit is itself distracted.

Perils of a Positivist Apostle.

All this, of course, if it is wisdom at all, is wisdom after the event. Twenty-six years ago, although I hesitated before accepting the new position which was proposed to me, I did not hesitate long. I had had fifteen years of a voluntary Positivist Apostolate, but I was still hopeful. I wanted freedom for my work—above all, freedom of public speech. I found journalism fettering. It was partisan, superficial, hasty, unstable. What was in my mind was the vision of a new human order, and of a body of men and women voluntarily consecrating themselves to its promotion. I wished to take

The Last of my Journalism.

my place in that body, with a fuller liberty of mind and action. At the end of 1895, therefore, I said good-bye to the editorial rooms of the *Daily Leader*. My friend Annand, its editor, was already gone, and another friend, Aaron Watson, reigned in his stead. My colleagues of the *Leader* staff—good comrades all—said some kind words of farewell to me, and presented me with a copy of Chambers's *Encyclopædia*, which I still have, with their signatures in the cover. Then I took my volumes home and entered on a new chapter of my life.

CHAPTER X

SOME POSITIVIST EXPERIMENTS

Among Comte's "social sacraments" there is one which is in a special sense his own invention. It is called the "Sacrament of Maturity," and is conferred at the age of forty-two. Its intention is to mark the period of full moral and intellectual responsibility in the life of the individual man. After the attainment of this age, according to Comte, he can seldom hope that the evil which he may do will be counterbalanced by the good, and it is in these later years, therefore, that the foundation of a posthumous religious judgment of him is specially laid. When I accepted my "apostolic stipend" I was, as I have said, forty-two, and as I was all for fulfilling Comte's prescriptions, except in the rare cases in which my mind was clear against them, I went up to London in 1896 to receive this sacrament at Dr. Congreve's hands. It was a sort of renewal or confirmation of his consecration of me to such priestly functions as I could be said to discharge, and it was at any rate a renewal of my homage to him personally. He was then about seventy-seven, and in failing health. After this, I believe, I only saw him two or three times. But he kept to the end, I think, his powers of comprehensive judgment, and of discriminating, orderly expression.

The Sacrament of Maturity.

In the same year, if I remember rightly, I paid a visit—one of various visits, before and after this time—to the Liverpool Positivists. Since the early days, when Dr. Carson and Albert Crompton first came to us in Newcastle, they had made considerable progress. This was partly due to the sagacity and steady efforts of Albert Crompton. He had become

Among Liverpool Positivists.

an original and impressive preacher, while continuing to discharge his responsibilities as the head of a great shipping house. He was, too, as I always thought, a singularly attractive and stimulating personality—a remarkable combination of the practical and the spiritual types. Another dominating figure among Liverpool Positivists was, as I have said, Mrs. Style—artist, and, in her own way, apostle. Every Thursday, in her house, there was a sort of social meeting for Positivists and others—a gathering unique in my experience for its religious and intellectual atmosphere, and for the high fraternal feeling which entered into it. Of this meeting, Mrs. Style was the presiding or informing genius. When I went to Liverpool in 1896, she provided for me a sort of feminine consecration, supplementing the one which I had just received from Dr. Congreve. A semi-circle of women was artistically arranged in the Church, and I, the only man, had to address them. "I should not like to face such an ordeal," said Albert Crompton to me. I, however, faced it; and, to the best of my recollection, the result so far as I was concerned was a ghastly failure.

The New Social Order.

From the beginning of 1896, my work as a Positivist apostle, or priest—or whatever name may best please my co-disciples of Comte—assumed a more systematic and a bolder character. I was now free to give to it the whole of such force as I had. I had in my mind a sort of picture—drawn, of course, from Comte's work—of the new religious community which I wished to create. Its creation—at least in principle and intention—was a great enterprise. It was, in fact, too great for a single mind or a single pair of hands. Certainly it was too great for me. Dr. Congreve, in entering on a similar mission, had been associated with men who were more or less his peers. They were, at any rate, men of high capacity and culture, who had, for the most part, a knowledge of Comte, if not an understanding of him, equal to his own. Even so, the ultimate result of his work in his own immediate centre was, in a single word, failure. I had none of his advantages. The one great advantage I had was in possessing him as my guide, and of this advantage his increasing

age, and very soon his death, deprived me. I stood, for the purposes of my public work, alone. The picture which was in my mind was naturally not in the minds of those to whom I had to make my appeal. They knew, most of them, little of Comte's volumes. They were, speaking generally, simple-minded, busy men and women, with little time or inclination for serious study. Yet, somehow, they were called upon to realize the vision of one of the greatest of modern thinkers, planning the vastest religious and social transformation that has ever been conceived.

Development of the Worship.

I had not one thing to do, or attempt, but many. One of these was to develop our worship or ritual. Dr. Congreve's form of service he had himself considered to possess only a provisional and experimental character—as, indeed, all such Positivist services necessarily and avowedly had. This in itself is not very favourable to inspiration or constructive effort. The artist who does great things is not carried towards perfection by the idea of the " provisional." He paints pictures, he writes poetry, he composes music, according to such vision as he has, trusting to others to accept and ratify his achievement. However, I made experiments in my own way. I developed, for example, our Church music, instrumental and vocal. Our original American organ in time gave place to a small pipe organ, and this small pipe organ in its turn was succeeded by a larger one. With such an instrument in our hands, we became a little more ambitious. My wish always was not to have " music " only, but music which contributed to the dramatic expression of Comte's synthetic conceptions—or, better still, of the advancing genius and creations of Humanity. It was no easy task to secure this. Musicians commonly have no synthetic conceptions—or had not at the time of which I am now speaking. My wife, however, who was our organist, gave me great practical help in this department ; and with her assistance, I gradually built up a collection of musical pieces which, in some measure, fitted in with the course of the Positivist religious year as Comte had planned it. One of the Sundays of his Calendar, for instance, is dedicated to Mozart. On that day our music,

vocal and instrumental, was—so far as our small resources allowed—a representation of musical development, from the ages of the Gregorian Tones and Palestrina to the age of Wagner.

It was on such a principle that we proceeded throughout. For vocal music we had only a few singers—amateurs, and ill-trained. We did, however, what we could. My canon in music was and is—I do not know what musicians would say to it—that it is better to do the best in music ill than to do the worst well. It required infinite labour and patience to do anything in this way with our few poor voices. Here, again, my wife's co-operation made things possible which otherwise would have been impossible. As for what we sang—well, at this period of my life I was, as I have said, a writer of hymns. I commonly wrote them—if small things may be compared with great—after the method which Burns seems to have followed with his songs : when I found a tune which I liked I made words for it. I was obliged to be my own artist in this department, because I gradually conceived the worship as a unified dramatic whole, and wanted hymns which should form a structural part of it. In this way, I was led to do what had not been done before—compose a series of hymns for the thirteen months of the Positivist calendar. These hymns we sang in their turn as the months came round. Traddles, in *David Copperfield*, said he found it " a bit of a pull " when he had to save a small sum of money. I found it a " bit of a pull " to produce these particular hymns. Each of them had to have a recognizable historic note, and yet to be in some measure a poem fit for music, not a mere abstract argument. They were done, however, in a way—a sort of History of Humanity in hymns. We sang them for a number of years.

Hymns of Worship.

Gradually I was led to the construction of a definite " Office of Public Worship " of a tolerably unified and harmonious character. I had, of course, no model to follow. Dr. Congreve's service was, as I have said, only tentative and provisional, and the Liverpool Positivists had had to content themselves, as we all had, with patching things

together. My "Office" was composed of three parts—an Act of Commemoration, an Act of Communion, an Act of Dedication, or self-consecration to the religious life. It was built in principle directly on Comte's teaching. It incorporated Dr. Congreve's two principal prayers. Of course, like other Positivist services, it was only an experiment. One special experimental thing I did in it was to introduce an Italian "Credo." This also was a new venture. Bits of Italian had been brought into other Positivist liturgies—mostly, I think, borrowed from Dante. Dr. Congreve had printed, but not used, a singular adaptation of Dante's paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer—converting it into "Our Lady's Prayer." The words "lord" and "lady," masculine and feminine, have been a trouble to Positivists, myself among them. I was bolder, or rasher, and made a whole Italian Credo, with the assistance of friends who understood that language better than I did. This we intoned, or sang, every Sunday. Dr. Congreve was not very favourable to my creed. His mind went back to the Council of Nice. To me, however, a creed was simply a liturgical poem—as in point of fact the Nicene Creed and other Catholic creeds, have been. I did not attempt or wish to fix doctrine.

An Office of Worship.

Into this Office of Public Worship I introduced two or three Catholic morsels. One of these was composed of certain short dramatic readings at the altar, taken from the fourth book of the *Imitation*.[1] Another was the *Tantum Ergo*. A third was the *Sancta Maria*. The two latter, of course, were sung. They all found a place in what to me was the central part of the service—the "Communion." Another of my innovations, or developments, was to give the altar a definitely Positivist character, but, at the same time, to make it, in appearance, more Catholic. Above it hung, as in our early days, the Sistine Madonna. Beneath this picture there was a red lamp, and beneath this, again, in successive descending groups, were six lighted candles. These seven lights, in my scheme,

A Positivist Altar.

[1] According to the ordinary arrangement of the books, but Book III in Sir Francis Cruise's translation.

represented Comte's seven master-sciences, from mathematics—the lowest in his classification—to morals, the highest, which was denoted by the red lamp. They were arranged, however, in such a way as to indicate the idea of his Trinity—first, in ascending order, the Science of Space; secondly the Science of the Earth; lastly, the Science of Humanity. The whole altar, in my mind, especially when adorned with plants and flowers—was a symbol of the Positivist Synthesis.

Our Side Altars.

Eventually, I supplemented the High Altar by two others, to right and left of it, but standing outside what, in a properly constructed church, would have been the Sanctuary. One of these was the Altar of Auguste Comte; the other was the Altar of his "Three Angels"—his mother, his adopted daughter, and Clotilde de Vaux, who was the presiding figure on it. Comte's bust we had always had in the church, but it was a new thing to place it on an altar. The Altar of the Three Angels was also an invention of my own, but not, of course, the homage rendered to Clotilde de Vaux, on which "advanced" religious Positivists had increasingly insisted, and which Comte himself had anticipated. To these various symbolic devices I added a small crucifix, suspended above the bust of St. Paul, and a statuette of the Virgin, placed above that of Charlemagne—the four images bearing testimony to that Catholic-feudal organization of society to which religious Positivism so often carries us back. Under the bust of Moses, although I personally knew no Hebrew, I placed the Ten Commandments in that language. At the end of the church, facing the High Altar, there was a large picture, handsomely framed, of Humanity bringing light and comfort to a poor and solitary household. This imposing canvas we owed to the art and kindness of Mrs. Style, its painter.

Such was our church, after some years of effort and development. Our altar, as I have said, helped to educate me—or some, perhaps, would say, to mislead me. For one thing, it caused me, at a certain stage, to robe myself in a cassock, surplice, and some sort of an arrangement—not

unlike an ordinary academic hood—in which were combined certain symbolic Positivist colours. This garb, in general appearances, was more Anglican than Catholic. But I felt that when we had advanced so far in symbolism and ritual the frock-coat in which I had hitherto ministered, was no longer in place. It had become an artistic solecism. I therefore donned these "vestments." On the whole, they were borne pretty patiently by the congregation, but one or two took the opportunity to secede; and there were others who, if they did not then secede, were, perhaps, furnished with motives for secession at a later date. Whether they seceded then or afterwards, they were, of course, well within their rights. It was, too, all very natural. Even Dr. Congreve's meagre bit of "ritual" had been an affront to some. My ritual was not meagre. It was profuse. It was too much to expect my "emancipated" congregation—Freethinkers, drawn largely from Protestant sects—to take to it kindly. One objected to an organ, another to a surplice, a third to a crucifix; most found kneeling a trial. There was something for everybody to dislike. But, speaking generally, they were a patient and long-suffering tribe—although suspicious, possibly, as to what was coming next.

The Coming of the Surplice.

In the scheme of our worship, the two greatest annual occasions were the Festival of All the Dead, held on the last day of the year, and the Festival of Humanity, held on the first. For these special celebrations we decorated our church rather elaborately with evergreens and flowers. To make these solemnities impressive and significant, I surrounded each of our thirteen historic busts—representing the great "types," or servants, of Humanity—with five lighted candles. One of these, the largest, was in honour of the principal type of the Positivist month, and the four others of the four weekly types. It was an orgy of ritual, or symbolism. Still, I take leave to think and to say, that when on these occasions we gathered together in the light shining from the universal mind of Humanity, our symbolism had a better sanction than the adherents of any religious body have ever possessed for such

Two Positivist Festivals.

a thing. It does not appear at present that there is the slightest tendency among men, for human and social purposes, to disown splendour and ceremony. The tendency is the other way. Our purposes were human and social—that is to say, they were, in a positive sense, religious; and allowing for our small numbers and resources, I do not know of any religious service, in any age or country, which can be compared in outlook and ideals, with these two festivals, as we celebrated them in our little church, in gratitude for the greatness of the human past, and devotedness to the human future.

Administering Sacraments.

To complete the story of our public worship—in so far as it belongs to this stage of our development—I ought to mention the administration of our sacraments. I had, as I have said, received such consecrations at the hands of Dr. Congreve, and I had now, in my turn, to confer them on others. In fact—being, in Mr. Frederic Harrison's language, a "pope in a back parlour"—he had actually given me a signed and sealed authority to administer them. The sacraments which I administered were Presentation, the nature of which I have already explained; Initiation, which marks the entrance on systematic education, and is given at the age of fourteen; Admission, which is conferred at twenty-one; Destination, given, as I have mentioned, at twenty-eight; Maturity; and Incorporation, a posthumous ceremony, intended to mark the final inclusion of the dead person in the spiritual, or "subjective" life of Humanity, and to denote the degree of honour assigned to him. I was, however, not satisfied with the forms which Dr. Congreve had originated for these sacraments. I wanted something more "Catholic," explicit and poetic. I had, therefore, to compose fresh forms. This meant more hymns and more ritual. I wished especially to secure that those who were "admitted" into the Church should become members with their eyes open, and should bind themselves by a voluntary acceptance of definite engagements. It was, of course, all in vain. "People will promise anything, and subscribe to anything," said Albert Crompton to me in his

blunt way, commenting on my forms. I found this to be true.

The Positivist Marriage.

Chief among the Positivist sacraments is marriage. This I did not actually celebrate, but I gave a sort of religious consecration to an already existing union. Of the complete Positivist marriage rite I found people a little shy. It involved severe conditions. One of these, under ordinary circumstances, was the acceptance of perpetual widowhood. A second marriage, according to Comte, is a form of polygamy. Another is the observance of three months' sexual abstinence—"chastity" is Comte's word—after the legal celebration of the marriage and before its religious sanction and physical consummation. Opinions differed among Positivists as to whether the wedded parties should occupy the same bed during the three months' "preamble," as it is called. Dr. Congreve seems to have held that they ought to do so. Albert Crompton told me that he entirely disapproved of it, as a gratuitous piece of cruelty. When Comte instituted these conditions, there were, in Scriptural language, "murmurs" against him. One of his disciples, a certain Dr. Foley, who was about to be married, was strongly opposed to them; and my friend Dr. Nicholson, who knew Foley, told me that Comte, on one occasion, called over the banisters to him, as he was leaving the house, saying: "If you object to the three months' preamble, I will make it six." The Master, serious spirit though he was, had his moments of humour, and perhaps this was one of them. Dr. Congreve celebrated some marriages. A lady friend of mine, who underwent the ceremony at his hands, told me of the shock she got when, in the midst of it he suddenly went down on his knees to her. This was one of his bits of ritual. It signified, I suppose, the homage of the priesthood to womanhood.

Worship, in my view, as I have now so often said, is the central thing in religion. But because it is the central thing it is not the only thing; and it is ultimately of no value unless, on the one hand, it is an expression of the total truth of human experience, and on the other ministers

to the exaltation of man's individual and social life. Associated with all this ceremony and symbolism of which I have spoken, was the synthesis of the Religion of Humanity, in so far as I was capable of proclaiming it. Its proclamation was a formidable task. It was, in fact, an exposition of Comte's doctrines—especially as those doctrines are summed up in two simplifying constructions of his genius. One of these is called a System of Sociolatry, or Social Worship; the other is his Positivist Calendar. The first is really a kind of conspectus of the human future, according to Comte's sociological conception of it; the second is a representation of the whole human past, considered as a movement towards this ideal future. The one, if you like, is prediction; the other is history. This was our Bible—not the confused and legendary accounts of ancient Hebrew tribes, who, in spite of their ethical and poetic genius, made not a single definite contribution to man's knowledge and power in any department, but an expression of the complete mind and life of Humanity, pressing forward, in its mysterious universe, to the fulfilment of its destiny. It was a great theme, and I do not pretend to have been equal to it; but it is easy to imagine what must be the feelings of any one who has held such a vision and such an argument in his mind, when he is condemned to listen to the ordinary Christian preacher rehearsing the metaphysical jargon of a lapsed mythology, or dealing out an illusory commentary on unintelligible texts.

Worship in Positivism.

One bit of teaching I had to do, or tried to do, which had not, perhaps, been done publicly and on the same scale in any Positivist church in this country before. Among the sacraments which I have mentioned is the Sacrament of Initiation. Like all Comte's ceremonies it is meant to consecrate and subserve a great practical purpose. In his ideal scheme of education, the pupil passes the first fourteen years of his life in the home, receiving moral and æsthetic culture at the hands of his mother. Then he enters the public school, for a seven years' systematic training in science. As a preliminary to this, however, he attends a course of nineteen lectures on what Comte

Comte's "First Philosophy."

calls the First Philosophy, intended mainly to guard him against the dangers of mere scientific speciality, and to give him a grasp of the general conceptions and governing aims of all science. I gave this course of lectures publicly—basing them largely upon Pierre Laffitte's excellent piece of work—after I had conferred the Sacrament of Initiation on my daughter. I repeated it and developed it some years afterwards, when I did the same thing for my son. My intention was to make some sort of a contribution, however small, to the realization of the Positivist School, as well as the Positivist Church; but I could, of course, only take these first steps. There was, as I have said, too much for one man to do.

Positivist Home Education.

Even this much I could not have attempted without the co-operation of my wife. Besides being our organist, and having the responsibility of much social work in connection with our little Church, she undertook the home-education of our two children, as far as possible, according to Comte's scheme. This was, from first to last, a fourteen years' task. All things considered—the claims of ordinary domestic duties, of the Church music, and of regular social reunions—it was as difficult and arduous a bit of work as any one has ever accomplished for the cause of Positivism. It was the more difficult because Comte, who is a great master of abstractions, is not a master of the concrete and practical. He launches an ideal, but he leaves his disciples to find out the way to it. In actual education, however, it is the concrete and practical that matter. Moreover, here as elsewhere, we were at the beginnings of things. One or two others had made an attempt to cope with this task of Positivist domestic education, but not in a form which left their methods and results commonly available. We had, therefore, to go first, and walk alone. In the course of these fourteen years, our children got from their mother a fair knowledge of what is called "English," with geography, history, preliminary mathematics, poetry, music, drawing, French, German and "literature." When they left her hands, I carried on their studies for a short time, a stage or two further, adding

some more mathematics, with "a little Latin and less Greek."

The Ideal and the Real in Education.

As to the value of such teaching, judged by our ordinary scholastic standards, I may, perhaps, say this. My daughter never went to school at all. My son, when he was about fifteen, was sent to the Newcastle Grammar School, where he soon made good progress, especially in mathematics. Both of them were entered at Armstrong College, in the University of Durham, and both easily got their degrees, with studentships and fellowships, one in literature, the other in science. They were both, moreover, able to do their work by their own personal study, without any individual coaching or assistance. There are certainly great industrial or professional difficulties in trying to carry out an independent scheme of education, such as Comte's, under existing circumstances. Business success and academic advancement are largely dependent on the acceptance of our State and official systems. From the intellectual point of view, however, it is clear from what I have said that even such an imperfect and experimental attempt as ours to realize Comte's exceptional educational conceptions did not leave the pupils at a disadvantage when they came to measure themselves against conventional standards. And, as I have said, the foundations of such success as they gained were laid, for the most part, by the mother as teacher in the home. I do not pretend, however, that this particular experiment was in the least decisive as to the ultimate place of Comte's system of education. It must be tried, if it is ever tried, by larger and surer tests. The mere affirmations of disciples, here as elsewhere, are of no value.

Positivism and Domestic Service.

Another little Positivist experiment which we made has its connection with home education, and so I may mention it here. Among the many things upon which Comte had turned his prophetic genius was the question—which has become so important since his day—of domestic service. He said he hoped the time would come when people would be unable to obtain servants at all, unless they satisfied

the claims of their family life and affections. My wife and I, when we first began to keep a young "general" servant, were very anxious to do what we could to realize his conceptions in this direction. We tried to associate her with us at meals, and in our common life—not leaving her to herself as a sort of outcast in the kitchen. This particular experiment was not very successful. At a later stage we tried again, with domestic assistants of a somewhat different type. This was the time when "mother's helps," or "lady helps" were beginning to come in. "Charladies," I think, were not then known. We were fortunate enough to secure two bright and friendly girls in this capacity, whom—to use the Positivist word—we "incorporated" in our household life. One of them, Miss Henrietta Bramley, elected to share our tasks and difficulties when we had to reduce our little staff at the time of my taking my "apostolic stipend," and eventually, applying another Positivist principle, we adopted her as a permanent member of our family. Here again, however, I must not build much on our experiences and attempts. Comte has given us, I think, a principle and an ideal, but they can only be rightly realized, if ever, in a transformed society.

Social Reunions.

This question of domestic service was, in our case, of the more importance because of our regular social reunions, springing out of our Church work. Every Saturday evening, during a number of years, we kept open house for all Positivists who cared to come, together with friendly and sympathetic non-Positivists. The ideal presiding over these little gatherings—for an ideal certainly entered into them—was the ideal of spiritual equality and fraternity. Almost all social classes were represented in them—working joiners and smiths, servant girls, barristers, shipowners, university professors, cultivated ladies. They were, too, often of an international character. Positivists from Brazil, Mexico, Denmark, France, and Germany, were, from time to time, numbered among our visitors, and occasionally we had Hindus. On the occasion of these "Saturday evenings" we brought in a little music and poetry, subservient, as far as possible,

to the idea of social comradeship and international fraternity. Here again, however, a large part of the labour involved was the unseen labour of domestic ministers, as distinguished from the public efforts of the "apostle." It is right that it should find a place in the record.

Political Tracts.

Among our public efforts I ought to say something about my political action. This took two principal forms. So long as I was a journalist I was in politics—except under my mask as a leading-article writer—a nullity, and one of the chief reasons which moved me to accept my Apostolic stipend was to gain freedom for bringing Positivism to bear upon public affairs. A Quaker historian has described the Society of Friends in England in the eighteenth century as a "hermit society." I could not conceive a Positivist community anywhere as a "hermit society." I have not the slightest doubt now that I understood Positivism then, as other Positivists did, in too narrow and sectarian a sense, and was in danger of being in fact what in principle I always refused to be—a "Comtist." But I at least wished Positivism to be a light set on a hill—a force actively penetrating the mind and life of society. It was in this spirit that I began the issue of a series of "Political Tracts," and certain other occasional pamphlets, or leaflets. One of the first of these was *The Nation and the Jubilee*, and was apropos of the "Diamond Jubilee" of Queen Victoria in 1897. It was an outspoken criticism of much in our social and political life, and an open avowal of republicanism. This little utterance was translated into French, German, Swedish, Spanish and Portuguese, and won me a good deal of recognition and applause. Best of all, it gained the approbation of Dr. Congreve, whose praise was never readily or profusely given, and was always worth more to me than that of anybody else.

I continued my Political Tracts till 1910, when, as will be seen, I had to put an end to that, and all other work connected with my Church. They were especially, but not exclusively, intended to bring the spirit and principles of Positivism to bear on international policy; and in this respect I was fortunate enough to have the concurrence and

approval of Dr. Congreve, who in this field was the ablest and most faithful of Comte's disciples. A Positivist author, however, if he wishes to conform to Comte's discipline of life, has not only to write his works; he has also to distribute them, or organize their distribution, himself. I have said that Comte thought of everything. Extravagant as this doubtless seems, it is not far from the truth. At any rate, among so many other things, he had turned his mind upon our modern publishing system, under which a writer sells his ideas or his art, if he can, to a literary merchant, whose interest in them is purely commercial, and who thus becomes the organ of their diffusion. Comte lays down the hard rule that a Positivist author must write for nothing, and give his works away to any whom he may wish to have them. In the issue of my political tracts and pamphlets I followed this rule. There was, of course, no merit in doing so. No one, I suppose, would have published them, if I had not done so myself, with such help as was given to me. Perhaps, however, the labour of distribution may be counted to me for righteousness, for—allowing for such co-operation as I could secure—I had to despatch with my own hands some thousands of these publications to all parts of the country, and, indeed, of the civilized world. This all gave me to think furiously on the difficulty of realizing the Master's ideals. He thought of everything, but he thought, as I have said, in abstractions.

The Author and his Books.

The second chief form of my political action was the establishment, in 1898, of the "Patriotic Union." The greatest of all political questions, of course, is the question of international policy; and towards the end of the nineteenth century all competent and attentive students of public affairs—amongst whom I naturally do not include those whom we call statesmen—could see that international policy was moving towards a catastrophe. My Patriotic Union was a very small attempt on my part to avert it. I drew up a series of articles, or canons, of foreign policy, all depending on the principle that the first duty of "patriotism" is the

The "Patriotic Union."

preservation of the peace of the world. I submitted these articles to some of my Positivist friends in London, Liverpool and elsewhere; and when they had expressed their agreement with them, I printed them as a basis for a little informal society—inviting the co-operation of all, whether Positivists or not, who accepted my principles. Among those who did so, with or without certain minor reservations, were Bishop Westcott, Dean Kitchin, Dean Freemantle, and leading Quakers, while Herbert Spencer gave them an indirect benediction. Dr. Congreve was kind enough to say that my little Society was the political analogue of Comte's projected "Religious League." Perhaps it was a premature League of Nations. Its articles were translated into French and other languages; and I addressed various public meetings, in Newcastle and elsewhere, in support of them. But it was all to no purpose. The voice of Noah, such as it was, was in vain; and the Deluge came.

A Sunderland Mission Church.

So far, the story of my "Apostolate" has been mainly concerned with the Newcastle Church. When, however, I became free for wider activities in 1896, I began to extend them to other towns. Among these was Sunderland. I was trying "experiments," and I tried an experiment there. The "Free Associate Church," of which I have spoken in an earlier chapter, was now long since dead and buried. Mr. Brockie, too, its good leader, was gone. But there were two or three of my Positivist converts in the town, and with their assistance, and Dr. Congreve's approval and support, I now set up a sort of mission church there. In this church I held afternoon services for about a year, going over from Newcastle for the purpose with my wife, who was our organist in this mission church, as well as in our own. We had to return, of course, in time for our Newcastle evening service. We continued this mission for a year. It was euphoniously described by Dr. Congreve as the "Sunderland branch of the Church of Humanity." Alas for such branches! At the end of the year we had to discontinue our experiment. It was a complete failure. Sunderland had beaten us. Its stoic indifference was proof against the

new gospel, and we had to shake off the dust from our feet and depart. Yet both before and after this experiment I found audiences there willing to listen to courses of lectures on Positivism.

The Mother and Child.

I found the same thing in a number of other towns which I visited in the course of my apostolate—Edinburgh, York, Bristol, Bradford, Middlesbrough, West Hartlepool, South Shields, Batley, etc. In three or four of these places I made three or four "converts"—if that is the right name to give to them. But the harvest was an exceedingly scanty one. In Middlesbrough, as I was in the way of trying experiments, I decided to try an experiment of an unusual character—at least among Positivists. Some of my co-disciples, especially in Liverpool, were great believers in the symbol of the "Mother and Child"—even as Raphael paints it. They seemed to think that its mere exhibition to the people would be more persuasive than an argument. I decided to test this. I had a little portable altar made, and carried it to Middlesbrough, where I set it up in my lecture room, with the "Mother and Child," candles, flowers, etc. But there was not the least response to it. I dare say the few who saw it wondered whatever it meant. Perhaps I had not enough of the faith which, as we have been told on high authority, moves mountains. As I believe I have sufficiently shown, I am by nature, as by principle, a symbolist, or ritualist; but I own, all the same, that the thing symbolized has always seemed to me of more importance than the symbol.

"Religion without Theology."

Along with these various missions, I carried on a sort of missionary correspondence. I inserted advertisements in one or two papers, offering to give information on Positivism to any inquirers. As a result of this, I had letters from all parts of the country; but usually when I had done my best to "explain" the Religion of Humanity, my correspondents somehow seemed to care no more about it. In two or three instances, however, this "mission by post" led me to visit some of the towns which I have mentioned. It was a sort of way of sounding the religious mind of England. I remem-

ber that at one period I was suddenly and mysteriously deluged with letters and post cards anxiously asking me for information about "religion without theology." I was still a hopeful person, and thought the golden age was come at last, without my seeking it, although I was greatly puzzled as to what good thing I had said or done to provoke this shoal of inquiries. Then I found that it was no good thing of mine, of whatever kind, that had given rise to them, but a paragraph referring to my work which was published in a sporting paper called the *Referee*—a greater oracle than Comte himself. However, not a single one of these correspondents who wanted "religion without theology" appeared to want it in the form of Positivism. Perhaps they thought the remedy was worse than the disease.

CHAPTER XI

THE LATER POSITIVISM

In the summer of 1899 Dr. Congreve died, and I went up to London to say my last farewell to him at the commemorative service which was held in his honour. One of the things which Comte forgot amidst the multitude of things that he remembered, was to provide his disciples with a burial rite—unless, indeed, as is possible, he meant them to be buried in silence. In practice, however, we commonly used some form of service at the interment—patching it together, for the most part, as we patched other services together, from older sources. The commemoration, which Comte intended to be observed—but for which, again, he had left no forms—was fixed for the third Sunday after the funeral. He insisted systematically, and on principle, as the adherents of some older religions had done spontaneously, on the importance of such numbers as three and seven. They were to him, in a sense, "sacred numbers," and had, at any rate, a certain subjective, or logical, value. It was this service of commemoration on the third Sunday, held in his own church, which I attended in the case of Dr. Congreve. His remains were cremated. I held a similar service in Newcastle, and gave an address on him which is still somewhere in print.

Death of Dr. Congreve.

After his death our little Positivist world was never quite the same to me. Its significant figure seemed to have left it. He was to me both a master and a friend; and when he was gone there was no one to take his place—no one with whom I was so spontaneously and happily in relation. He was, too, in a sense which to me at least was real, my ecclesiastical

The Protagonist of English Positivism.

superior. I took no important steps—except in his later years, when his health was failing—without consulting him. His last letter to me, written within a week of his death, was one in which he sanctioned my instituting, for the first time, the Positivist "Festival of Machines," as not long before he had authorized me to initiate the Festival of St. Francis of Assisi. On more than one occasion, when writing to him for his opinion on some knotty practical point, I asked him not to trouble about giving me his reasons, as his bare decision would be sufficient. What Harrison and Beesly said of him I have mentioned. I can only speak of him as I knew him during twenty years of an uninterrupted relationship and correspondence. I could trust him unreservedly, both for his sincerity and his judgment. He was a clear-sighted and courageous idealist, faithful to his vision, loyal to his master, wise and constant in the service of his cause, candid in speech, private and public. Those who may wish to know the meaning and the history of religious Positivism must study Dr. Congreve's writings. They are a record of forty years.

An Apostolic Letter.

The work of his Chapel Street Church—according to his conceptions and methods—may be said to have begun and ended with him. Like Comte, when he died he left no successor. For a short time, Henry Crompton assumed the local direction, but his health, which had never been robust, eventually proved unequal to this new strain upon it. "Chapel Street" then entered upon a time of varying fortunes. When it ceased to mean Dr. Congreve, such relation as it had had to the other small centres of Positivist religious activity in England naturally existed no longer. His disappearance meant for me, among other things, the loss of the annual contribution which he had been accustomed to make to my work from his Fund. The "apostolic stipend," which had been promoted by my Liverpool supporters was not affected by his death, but this was only for my personal maintenance and that of my family. It proved to be insufficient even for that purpose, and did not enable me to take any religious action at all. I therefore issued what I called an "Apostolic

Letter," in which I appealed for monetary support to enable me to continue my work, and instituted a "Sacerdotal Fund" in my turn, in accordance with the Positivist tradition and Dr. Congreve's practice. In this Apostolic Letter, I defined my personal position, and indicated my conception of religious Positivism, with the line of spiritual policy which I proposed to follow in furthering it. On the voluntary contributions which were given to me in response to this and similar appeals, I had to depend for the prosecution of my work, so long as I was able to go on with it.

Three Irish Positivists.

Among my principal supporters were three well-known Irishmen who, after Dr. Congreve's death, maintained much the same relation with me, either personally or by correspondence, as they had formerly maintained with him. They were all three among the original disciples of Comte, and frequent references to them may be found in his correspondence. To one of them, Henry Dix Hutton—a barrister, and afterwards, I think, Librarian of Trinity College, Dublin—he addressed a number of interesting letters. An amusing feature of these letters is his frequent and severe censures of Hutton's handwriting, which he made desperate, but apparently unsuccessful, attempts to amend. He made it larger, Comte magisterially told him, but it was not therefore more legible. Comte's own handwriting was minute, but it was clear. As Mr. Hutton was a correspondent of mine for several years, I had some reason to understand the condemnation which the Master so liberally bestowed upon him. I remember in a boastful moment telling him —I am afraid without much justification—that I had improved my own bad caligraphy, and he asked me, quite simply, whether I had used a copy-book for the purpose. I think his mind went back some forty-five years to the severe lessons he had received from the founder of the Religion of Humanity, and to his own humble attempts to profit by them.

Another of these Irish Positivists was Dr. Allman, the head of Queen's College at Galway and author of *A History*

of Greek Geometry. A third, and by far the best known of them, was Dr. John Kells Ingram, who was at one time Professor of Greek at Trinity College, but afterwards of Economics. He wrote a number of able works, among them *A History of Political Economy*, the basis of which was originally published as the article on that subject in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He was a man of an exceptionally wide range of scholarship and culture, and was, when he died, described in the newspapers as "the best-educated man in Europe." The fact was that his study of Comte gave to him, as it gave to others, a breadth of intellectual and human outlook such as could have been gained from no one else; and to this he added great personal powers, and the industry of many years. His prose writings were of conspicuous lucidity and charm, and his verse—for he was no mean poet—was dignified and graceful. When he was a young man he wrote a stirring lyric which has been famous in the history of Irish patriotism —"Who Fears to Speak of '98?" Afterwards, when he had gained a high academic position, he was not so anxious as before to have this bold ballad in circulation. He became cautious and circumspect. "'Who Fears to Speak of '98?'" said a waggish critic; "why, John Kells Ingram." I asked him to include the poem in the volume of his reprinted verses, which he did. Comte had pronounced prophetically for the "separation of Ireland from England," but his three Irish adherents—who never became more than three—were of a more timid temper than their master. They were, in fact, all opposed to the Home Rule movement.

Dr. J. K. Ingram.

After Dr. Congreve, Dr. Ingram was, among the older Positivists, the one who gave me the greatest appreciation and encouragement in my work till almost the end. Such moral and intellectual support is exceedingly precious to any one who is prosecuting such a task, under such circumstances, as I had accepted for myself; and it is not always given. By him it was given continuously and abundantly; and it was the more precious because of the high quality and eminence of the man who gave it. There came a moment when it

Some Correspondents.

ceased entirely, and gave place to disagreement and rupture; but up to that time no Positivist correspondent of mine—with the one exception which I have mentioned—ever sent me such words of incentive and honour as those which I received from Dr. Ingram. When Dr. Congreve died, however, I fell heir to a certain correspondence which formerly went to him—from France, America, India and elsewhere. Among the Hindu Positivists who wrote to me during a number of years was Jogendra Chandra Ghosh, the author of various writings on the Hindu Theocracy and similar subjects. He was a man of learning and ability, but with the iron of India's subjection and effacement in his soul. He was, however, cautious and patient. I believe I was more a "rebel" for India than he was himself. Indian Positivism, such as it was, was originally due to the influence of English Civil Servants—among them Sir Henry Cotton—and this again was due to Dr. Congreve. He was always the initiating mind of the significant Positivist movements.

I have mentioned my Commemorative Address on him. I sent it, among others, to John Morley. In acknowledging it, he said: "I have read it with much interest and much general sympathy with its spirit. Yet, after all, it looks as if humanity were at this moment being *rebarbarized*." This was written in October, 1899. The "rebarbarization" to which Morley referred was the outbreak of the war in South Africa, which began in this very month. As it happened, I did not hear from him again till the vaster "rebarbarization" of the Great War was commencing, when, as will appear, I wrote to congratulate him on his withdrawal from the Government. The period of the Boer War was for me a time of anxious and incessant activity. I was openly and entirely opposed to our British action from first to last, as, I think, were most English Positivists. Dr. Congreve was gone, but he had left me in no way undecided as to the line which ought to be taken at such a juncture by any one who had imbibed from him Comte's principles of international policy. I issued several of my "Political Tracts" on the subject, and

The Boer War.

circulated them broadcast at home and abroad. Some of them were translated into French and Spanish. One of them took the form of a public letter on "Empire and Humanity," addressed to the House of Commons. That august body, which has never, perhaps, condemned or opposed a British war in its history, turned a deaf ear, of course, to such counsels as mine. The Boer War was possibly—for I cannot be sure of it—the meanest of all our wars, but it was not too mean for English statesmanship and public opinion to invest it with a glamour of patriotism and heroic self-sacrifice. It was the great day of Joseph Chamberlain, whose statue, I believe, now adorns the precincts of the House of Commons.

The Boer Flags on the Altar.

My condemnation of British action, and sympathy with the South-African Republics, found more than one expression. I had always in my mind the conception of an independent spiritual Church, representing the better soul of man, and capable of courageously dissociating itself from the evil proceedings of the State. There has, of course, never been such a Church, but I symbolized it and its judgment, as well as I could, by placing the flags of the two Boer Republics above the altar of my own little church—the only church in the world, I suppose, where such a thing was to be seen. There they remained till the end—or almost the end—of the war, when I had a silver badge put upon them, with an inscription setting forth their history, and sent them by way of Paris to Dr. Lleyds, agent of the Transvaal Republic in Europe, with a letter asking him to transmit them to South Africa. He sent me a reply promising to do so, but what became of them afterwards I do not know. I published my letter and his at the time. A Positivist friend of mine told me that I had been guilty of "high treason" in having such transactions with "the enemy." I think I was not greatly disturbed by this suggestion. I felt then, as I feel now, that we owe a spiritual allegiance to Humanity greater than any which is due to a so-called "country." Such a "country" may at a given moment be only a greedy dominant faction, urging the people into an unnecessary war, and with a Cham-

berlain, or a Lloyd George, or a Bottomley as the voice of its mind and conscience.

A Service for the Dead Boers.

During the South African War two of the Boer leaders, who were on a sort of mission to this country, came to Newcastle to pay me a visit. They were stalwart and imposing figures. They were men of simple and straightforward minds. Such a thing, of course, could not have happened in the "Great War." Even as it was, it excited some suspicion and unfavourable remark. When the war was over, I had what I called a "Requiem Service" in commemoration of the Boers who had died defending their country against British aggression. This service was publicly advertised, and was commented on by the local Press. Afterwards I put up a memorial brass in the church expressive of the same idea, but as the inscription was in Italian it was perhaps not offensive to any casual "patriots" who might happen to see it. In all probability, no one noticed it. The Boers, as we all know, eventually made a pact with their British conquerors on which the conquerors at least have complimented themselves. It then appeared that we had destroyed Boer independence with one hand and restored it with the other, waging a wanton and costly war only "for the fun of the thing." Since then some of the Boers, General Smuts among them, have talked "British Empire" with the best of us. It was not so that I understood and celebrated their cause.

J. M. Robertson Again.

It was during the trouble and excitement of the Boer War that I again came into relation with J. M. Robertson, whom I had not seen since the old Edinburgh days which I have mentioned. He was one of the most active and courageous opponents of the war, and came to Newcastle to address a public meeting against it. I had, I think, not long before this written a little book which I called *Words on the Positive Religion.* Robertson had somehow got hold of it, and came to see me one day carrying it in his hands, with the intention, as he said, of exposing what he called my "sophisms." He has, as we all know, criticized many men and many things, and I was

naturally not a little alarmed when he sat down and opened my poor pages. I think my argument on prayer, such as it was, was what was most offensive to his pure rationalism. I quoted to him Comte's definition of prayer as "commemoration followed by effusion." "Effuse as much as you like," said Robertson; "but why call it prayer?" However, when he had done his best and his worst on my little book, I remarked, "Is that all you have to say against it? Why, I could say more myself." "Then you ought to re-write it," replied Robertson promptly and severely. But perhaps we all carry in our minds an ideal truth which we cannot adequately express, or an ideal form which we cannot seize.

The "West Hartlepool Church."

After the Boer War I settled down again, in our little Church or elsewhere, to the various regular activities to which I have already referred. My friend Eustace Charlton, whom I have mentioned in an earlier page, was now married, and living at West Hartlepool. So long as he was able to continue living there, there was what we used to call a "West Hartlepool Church." The services, or meetings, were held at his house, and for a considerable time I paid a monthly visit to it to co-operate in the work. Eventually this West Hartlepool Church, like some other Positivist missions, came to an end. Of Eustace Charlton I need only say here that he was the kindest of friends and most generous of supporters, and that without his help the action which I took in connection with the Newcastle Church, after Dr. Congreve's death, would have been impossible. That action, from first to last, was, to use my former word, in the nature of a series of progressive experiments. This was especially true of the worship. As I proceeded with these experiments, too, they naturally had upon my own mind an effect of education and development. There had never been, as I cannot too often insist, any finality, anything "orthodox," or authoritative, about Positivist religious action anywhere. The purpose which I had in my mind expressed itself, perhaps, in a form; and this form in its turn gave rise to a fuller purpose, expressing itself in a fuller form. My one ruling

ambition was to do everything in my power to carry out Comte's conceptions boldly and at once, instead of simply leaving them for others to realize at some distant future.

It was a perilous ambition, and too big for me. One of Comte's latest developments, for example, was his insistence on the principle of spiritual submission. It is, of course, not the principle of a scientific teacher, as such. The scientific teacher is a doctor of demonstration. He does not ask us to submit to him, but to investigate and think. He trusts his truth to the reason of mankind, because he knows it can be proved. Comte, however, was in his own conception the founder of a spiritual society or church ; and, as he himself saw and said, there can be no such society without a government. He intended the government of his church to be the priesthood —not a committee, or a parliament. Upon this there can be no doubt. One of his disciples once objected to him that this new spiritual government which he was going to set up would probably abuse its powers. " I hope it will," said Comte calmly, in his paradoxical way, " otherwise it would not be a government." When I was trying to shape my Church, I thought, as I think still, and as Comte thought, that the rule of a single man is more favourable both to good government and to liberty than the rule of a committee— provided always, an all-important proviso, that he is understood to be simply the servant and organ of the community, and that the community itself has the right republican intelligence and civic courage.

Comte and Submission.

Be this as it may, I preached Comte's principle of submission, as I preached his other principles. It seemed to me to be a part of the doctrine of the new social order, spiritual and temporal. But, of course, it was useless to preach it. Those to whom it was proclaimed could never see it as an abstract truth. Submission, in their view, meant submission to a particular man, as in fact, for the time being, it necessarily did. We were involved in a vicious circle. Without submission there could be no Church, considered as an organ-

Submission and Secession.

ized spiritual community. But no one was disposed, there and then, to accept and apply the principle. As a consequence, I never, to the end, was able to form a Church, any more than Dr. Congreve was. The word was there, but not the thing. This doctrine of voluntary spiritual submission was the chief touchstone of my little congregation. The less intelligent accepted it, because it meant nothing to them. Such people, as Albert Crompton had said to me, will pledge themselves to anything. But the more intelligent saw that it was a fundamental and far-reaching doctrine, and they naturally, under the circumstances, declined to be bound by it. When it was preached they seceded, as others had seceded because of a surplice or a crucifix, or even the blessed word "Being." My religious work in Newcastle began and ended with secessions, and for this I cannot see that any one was to blame, unless it was myself. Ours is a distracted age. From the Catholic Church at one end of the scale to the tiniest Protestant sect at the other, and from the greatest nation to the smallest village, the modern intellectual disorder touches us all; and it was too much to expect a little Positivist community to suddenly rise above it.

As a matter of fact, I did not expect it. But I still felt bound to go on with my "experiments," as I have called them. I wanted to realize my vision of a Positivist Church. In working at this task I was led, or thought I was led, to a clearer conception of what such a Church ought to be, and especially of its relation to the writings of Comte. There was a good deal of natural "Protestantism" among Positivists, and curiously enough, not least among those who had been originally Catholics. Protestantism is Bibliolatry. "The religion of Protestants," said Chillingworth, "is the Bible, and the Bible only." There were not a few Positivists to whom Comte's volumes were a sort of Bible, capable of literal application by the first comer. I soon saw that this was mere illusion. Comte is, in fact, of all great thinkers—and precisely because he is so great—the one who least lends himself to such a treatment. His works need a body of

The Church and the Gospel.

independent and religious-minded men to place a practical judgment on them, and to give progressive effect to them, in so far as they admit of it. In other words, they need the "Church." It was from this point of view that I wrote and published a little pamphlet on "The Positive Idea of the Church." But, of course, it is open to any one to hold that we do not need a Church at all, but only a book and a man, or a multitude of books and men, with the House of Commons, or some other committee, as our co-ordinating authority.

When I entered on the new stage of my apostolic work in 1896, I inherited from Dr. Congreve and Comte certain traditions and practices. I considered them, at that time, *de rigueur*. One of these was the issue of an "Annual Circular." In my own Annual Circulars I gave not only a statement of the receipts and expenditure of our little church, but some account of the Positivist movement throughout the world, in so far as it was known to me, together with such comments as seemed to me opportune, on questions of theory and practice. Into these circulars, in fact, I put my mind, as it developed in consequence of my experiences and reflections. I meant them, too, to be a contribution to the mind of the progressive "Church," occupied with the task of putting some sort of practical construction on Comte's religious teaching. I never conceived my work in Newcastle as a work for Newcastle only. What I thought and what I did I wished—to use the grand style of a little sect—to be for the good of the whole "Church." There was, of course, no Church, but only a little company of uncertain and divided men and women, doing what they could to form one. However, it did not appear to me then, and does not appear to me now, that any one ever paid much attention to these "Annual Circulars." From time to time I heard some murmurs against them. What I said in them, I feel sure was not always acceptable to those who took a different line from mine, and who naturally thought their own the best. But the murmurs came to an end, as in due time the circulars themselves did.

Annual Circulars.

Annual Addresses.

Besides the Annual Circulars there were "Annual Addresses," delivered on the "Festival of Humanity" on New Year's Day. These, too, were a sort of etiquette. A number of my addresses were printed, together with various other occasional writings. One of these Annual Addresses was on "The Rule of Auguste Comte." The monastic type of spiritual discipline, as I have explained before, had always attracted me, from the time when I paid my first visit to the Trappist House at Mount St. Bernard's. Its rule was mainly negative and prohibitive, but still it was a rule, and out of the organized self-command sprang beauty and culture. Religious Positivism, as I conceived it, was also a rule of life, only instead of being merely punitive and repressive, it was a rule of production and realization. This thought I put into my little pamphlet, *The Rule of Auguste Comte.* Among others to whom I sent it was Dean Kitchin, who was an occasional correspondent of mine. He was a man of peace, and had the courage of what would now be called his pacifism. He stood stoutly out against the Boer War. He was President of the Peace Society in Newcastle, and I remember hearing him address a meeting of it, "a beggarly array of empty benches," when there was hardly another clergyman present besides himself. He was commenting on a sermon of Bishop Butler's—on "conflict" I think. "There is nothing in this sermon," he said, "to indicate that the Bishop ever heard of our Lord." However, here is the Dean's little note to me:

A LETTER FROM DEAN KITCHIN.

THE DEANERY,
DURHAM.
February 18, 1901.

DEAR MR. QUIN,

I have read your paper on Auguste Comte with great interest. It seems to me that you are doing what the Church professes to do, and does not!

The Rule of Poverty is far more needed now than it was in good St. Francis' days.

I shall keep your sermon, and read it again, when I feel extra helpless!

Yours with many thanks,
G. W. KITCHIN.

In this way we went on with our work, in its various fields and forms, till the beginning of 1904. Then an opportunity came, as we thought, for a new departure. In our St. Mary's Place Church we had now been housed for some eighteen years, and had, in spite of all our secessions, formed something that might be called a "congregation," however small. In the meantime our piece of land, for which we had originally paid a modest price, had considerably increased in value. We therefore sold it, and with the proceeds bought a much larger piece in Eskdale Terrace. There we hoped to erect some sort of a permanent "Church of Humanity," and I had plans made for this purpose, intending, if we could do no better, to put up at least a section of our proposed building. The scheme was absurdly ambitious and ill-advised. We could not secure the necessary financial support for it, and were involved in a good deal of expense. About this time, too, some of our later secessionists seceded, and although their defection meant little from the pecuniary point of view, it meant much from the point of view of religious confidence and co-operation. I had, therefore, to content myself with setting up another, but somewhat larger, iron church, with a good lecture room attached to it. While this was in course of erection, we occupied a considerable-sized house in the same street, and carried on our services in it. Some of our Christian neighbours resented the intrusion of a Positivist Church amongst them, and threatened us with legal opposition. This, however, eventually came to nothing.

Another Removal.

In this church in Eskdale Terrace—our last church—we remained for about five years. By the kindness of my friend Eustace Charlton, we were enabled to beautify it internally, and bring it, in some degree, into correspondence with our ideas. As we had now a Lecture Room at our disposal, moreover, I was able to make some small attempt to carry out two of Comte's conceptions which we had previously had to leave in abeyance. His religious system is really a vast criticism and discipline of human life, individual and social; and,

The Theatre and the Club.

amongst other things, his spiritual purview included the theatre. Ultimately, I think, he contemplated its disappearance altogether, but in the meantime he proposed to reform it, and make it at any rate, a home of masterpieces. From this point of view, I arranged some dramatic readings—the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus, Goethe's *Faust*, Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and *Comus*, *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, etc., associating such suitable music with them as I could find. We also gave *Enoch Arden*, with Richard Strauss's music. The other institution of Comte's which I now tried to set on foot was the "Club," an informal association for the discussion of public affairs, with a workman as its president.

CHAPTER XII

ORDER AND DISORDER

A Dependent Apostle.

When we entered into possession of our new church, such as it was, in Eskdale Terrace, I had been for twenty-five years at work as a Positivist "apostle." During fifteen of them I had been a sort of voluntary "lay-preacher," or amateur; during the last ten I had—to use the Positivist word—been in receipt of a "subsidy." Since my acceptance of this "subsidy," I had had to continue and develop my apostolate—especially since Dr. Congreve's death—according to my own judgment and capacity, with such means and co-operation as I could secure. It was a singular and perilous position. As it happened, I was then the only Positivist "apostle" in England entirely dependent on others—not only for my power of religious action, but even for my means of subsistence. Congreve, as I have said, had had his own private income, and the leaders of the Liverpool Positivists were men of independent resources, who could set up a church and adopt such a policy as they thought best without appealing to others for pecuniary help. My situation was different. I could only act according to the support, material or spiritual, which was voluntarily given to me. On the other hand, Comte's teaching, whether as regards spiritual or temporal organization, is antagonistic to what is called "democracy." He is, as I have explained, opposed to the Parliamentary, or "committee" principle—the principle of votes. He is in favour of personal rule and personal responsibility in the interests of the "Republic"—subject always to the control of public opinion, and to the withdrawal of co-operation when its continuance seems impossible. Comte's doctrine, given certain conditions, seemed sound

to me at the time to which I am now going back, and seems sound to me now. But it is a doctrine which in practice, and in the absence of those conditions, is exceedingly dangerous.

Order and Disorder.

It was especially dangerous for a Positivist apostle in such a position as mine. According to the sentence which I have already quoted—a sentence which Comte did not originate, but repeated with approbation: "Our materials are disorder; out of them it is necessary to construct order." This was, as Comte employed it, a pregnant and prophetic sentence. The disorder with which a Positivist apostle had to cope was, as I have sufficiently shown, threefold. First, there was the disorder of Comte's mind itself—a mind subject to incessant change and self-contradiction, incomplete while moving towards completeness, and calling for a comprehensive and difficult interpretation. Secondly, there was the disorder of the apostle's own mind—a mind in its turn subject to change, uncertainty, self-criticism, and naturally gaining a fuller understanding and conception of its work in proportion as it proceeded with that work. Lastly, there was the disorder of those to whom he had to appeal for support and co-operation—men and women, differing in position, capacity and culture, who had cast all religious beliefs and practices out of their lives, and who naturally experienced a high intellectual and moral difficulty in accepting such a religion as Positivism, with its vast range of synthetic teaching, and its apparent paradoxes—the paradoxes, especially, of prayer, worship, sacraments, priesthood, and "submission" in a system without a God, professing to be founded on scientific demonstration.

The Committee Principle.

In a situation such as this—a situation which was, in fact, a sort of microcosm of the whole modern world, spiritual and temporal—it is not in the least wonderful that Positivists commonly preferred the apparent security of the committee principle to the dangers of complete personal responsibility. Under the committee principle you cannot be called to individual account for your decisions. The mysterious "majority"

bears the burden. Wisely or unwisely, I had made a different choice. I had, at my own risk and peril, undertaken an almost impossible task. It is, of course, true that those who supported me in this task also ran a certain risk. They might eventually come to the conclusion—as I am sure some of them actually did—that they had "put their money on the wrong horse," or paid for a tune for which they had not called. On the other hand, they had at least the comfort of knowing—if I may vary the metaphor—that they had not put all their eggs into one basket. That is what I had actually done.

Aims of the Apostle.

In attempting to create order out of this threefold disorder, I had, as I have said, to reckon with the fact that I was myself a part of the disorder. To use an older style, it was in a certain degree, a case of the blind leading the blind—or at least, of one who was himself only slowly mastering a great truth having to teach others in proportion as his own understanding of it increased. It was in the nature of such a task as this to educate those who undertook it. Following in the footsteps of Dr. Congreve, I had proposed to myself—first, to preach the Positivist synthesis, or the Religion of Humanity; secondly, to institute some sort of public worship, as at once an æsthetic expression of that synthesis, and an aid to its propagation and realization—a worship including prayer and sacraments; thirdly, to take some steps towards the formation of the Positivist priesthood; fourthly, to realize, as far as possible, the Positivist home-education at the hands of the mother, and prepare the way for the Positivist School; fifthly, to shape a Positivist Church, or organized community, under a personal spiritual direction, freely accepted; sixthly, to bring the spirit and principles of Positivism to bear on public affairs—especially in the spheres of industrial and international policy. That, speaking briefly and generally, was what I understood by "creating order out of disorder." I aimed, quite consciously and deliberately, at the establishment of a spiritual *imperium in imperio*—at the formation of a new religious and social community, wholly independent of the State, which should

develop into the prophetic type, on however small a scale, of the higher human order to which Positivism pointed us.

The Apostle and his Public.

It was, as I have admitted, too big a task for any one mind, or any one pair of hands—even if I had had from the first an adequate and fixed conception of it, and the co-operation of others who were similarly settled and unified in their views. Neither of these conditions, as is clear, was present. But what I could do I did—as, I hope, I have in some degree shown. Further, as I proceeded with my work, and gained what seemed to me a sounder and fuller conception of it, I always took my little public into my confidence. In my "Apostolic Letter," Annual Circulars, Annual Addresses and various other publications—as well, of course, as in my discourses to my own small congregation—I gave expression, as well as I could, to the developments of mind as to the doctrines and realization of Positivism to which I was naturally led by my work and experience. According to my view, it was right and necessary to do this. There was, as I conceived it, and as cannot be too clearly understood, nothing fixed in Religious Positivism. No one conception of it, or presentation of it, could be considered final. My own bit of work I regarded, more and more, let me repeat, as a series of experiments. They were a contribution to the common stock of experience; and I wished both to make their nature known and to gain as much support in developing them as possible. It was the more important to do this because there was a natural tendency amongst most of those to whom I had to appeal to consider "Positivism"—even, perhaps, my own presentation of it—as if it were somehow a fixed and settled thing, in principle and form, whereas it was a thing fluid and emerging. We were never, in any real sense, a Church; we were only trying to become a Church. In my case, as in Dr. Congreve's case, there was, once more, the word, but not the thing.

I have spoken of the disorder, or unsettlement, in Comte's mind, and in the minds of his apostles and disciples. It is, however, necessary to understand the nature and limits

of that disorder. In regard to certain fundamental points we were, as I have already said, convinced and united.

The Basis of Positivism.

We agreed, for instance, that in order to be a Positivist it was necessary to be "emancipated"—that is to say, not to "believe in God," or the supernatural. Secondly, we were agreed as to the ultimate sovereignty of science. Thirdly, we "religious" Positivists were agreed that it was possible and necessary to have a positive or scientific religion, as well as a positive philosophy. Fourthly, we were at one in holding and saying that we were Positivists, but not "Comtists," as we were often called by our critics. This meant that we professed to be adherents of a principle, and not merely of a man, and only of the man in so far as he was representative of the principle. It was a common saying among us: "We all have our reserves." There were, that is, points in Comte's teaching which we did not accept, or as to which we had doubtful minds. The one point in his teaching as to which we had no doubt was Positivism itself—meaning by Positivism "emancipation" and science. The "philosophic" Positivists in the name of science took possession of philosophy; the "religious" Positivists, equally in the name of science, took possession of religion also.

This was the basic and controlling principle that we religious Positivists got from Comte—that religion, the word and the thing, in terminology, doctrine,

Principles and Practice.

worship, institution, and organization, belonged to science. The recognition of this principle, however, was one thing; its practical application was another. Comte's own application of it was, as I have shown, tantamount to a "positivization" of Catholicism, with certain important exceptions and additions which I have pointed out. In this positivization of Catholicism I, like other religious Positivists, had followed him. As I proceeded with my work, however, its meaning and possibilities disclosed themselves more fully. I began to ask myself why, having advanced so far in the positivization of Catholicism, we should not advance still further. I saw that Comte himself continually, to the end of his life, extended his

"positivization" of religion—to the extent, at last, of supplementing the laws of science by fictitious "wills," and of including "Fetishism" itself—according to his own doctrine, the most theological of his "theological" stages—within Positivism. I saw that Dr. Congreve, my immediate master, had slowly, but progressively, moved in the same direction.

New Developments.

I in my turn was carried forward. I recognized, for example, that the word "God" considered as a symbol of the human mind, as much belonged to positive science as the general term religion, and the terms "soul" and prayer; and that if it was possible and right for us to use any one of these theological symbols, assigning to it a positive meaning and value, so it was possible and right, in principle, to use them all. Again, Comte habitually read for himself, and we all read after him, privately and publicly, the *Imitation*. He and we did not read it as "theologists," but as Positivists, understanding its beautiful spiritual language in a positive sense. Dr. Congreve, in his Service Form, when he introduced words of Christ, prefaced his quotation with the statement: "thus saith Humanity"; and when he commemorated the death of Comte, read as applying to him that fifty-third chapter of Isaiah which by Christians has been commonly understood as referring to Christ. There was, in fact, no end to this sort of thing among religious Positivists.

Festival of the Virgin Mother.

Among the most important of our exercises in the "positivization of Catholicism" was the celebration of the Festival of the Virgin Mother. We did this in conformity with Comte's own prescription, and we followed him in fixing the 15th August—the Festival of the Assumption in the Catholic Church—as the day for its observance. In instituting this ceremony, Comte meant to do two principal things—first, to exhibit what he considered to be the "continuity" of Positivism with Catholicism; second, to pay a religious tribute to ideal womanhood by an act of worship. I had personally not the slightest objection to this Festival of

the Virgin Mother. On the contrary, it appealed to me; and I made as good a festival of it as I could, celebrating it year after year. Eventually, however, I began to ask myself how, if it was right and "Positivist" to celebrate the "theological" Festival of the Virgin Mother on the 15th of August as a mark of our continuity with Catholicism, could it be wrong and "unpositivist," with a similar intention, to celebrate the Festival of the Nativity on Christmas Day?

Comte and Christ.

This led me to reconsider Comte's teaching and attitude in regard to Christ. That attitude is something more than a stupendous paradox; it is a stupendous blunder. It is a sin against science. It is an offence against Humanity. All history—Catholic, Protestant and secular—is its condemnation. It is impossible to honour Catholicism while dishonouring Christ. Most of all is it impossible to honour the Mother of Christ while dishonouring Christ Himself. This remains equally true whether we regard Christ as what He actually is in history—the God of Catholicism—or as a Man, or as a mere myth and fiction, the construction of poetic imagination. In either case, He has always been the central and fundamental Figure of Christianity, as a doctrine, worship and life. When Dr. Congreve, quoting Christ's words in his prayer-book, accompanied them with the formula "thus saith Humanity," it is plain that he had the warrant of history, since the highest religious mind of Humanity during almost two thousand years, has found itself expressed in Christ, its own creation. In principle, it is, of course, open to us, from the point of view of science, to dismiss Christ from the religion of the future, just as we may artistically represent Humanity as a woman holding a child in her arms without any reference to the Catholic Virgin Mother. But we cannot, according to science, and in the name of religious continuity, at once exalt the idea of the Virgin Mother and degrade the idea of her Virgin Son.

Comte was a man of colossal genius, who made colossal mistakes. Some of them he himself boldly confessed and repaired. He made such a mistake, for example, when

in his *Catechism* he declared that Positivists came forward to "irrevocably exclude from political supremacy the various slaves of God—Catholic, Protestant or Deist—as being at once retrograde and anarchic," and then, only three or four years afterwards, declared that any religion was better than no religion, and appealed to the Head of the Jesuits to join him in forming a universal Religious League. Either he was wrong when he wrote his *Catechism*, or he was wrong when he proposed to form his Religious League; and in any case it is plain that such a thinker is not to be rightly interpreted in the spirit of a sectarian literalism. His fundamental principles were sure and lasting, for they were the principles of science; his application of them was continually changing, and is naturally subject to correction.

Comte and his Mistakes.

In deciding, therefore, to supplement the Positivist Festival of the Virgin Mother with the Positivist Festival of the Nativity, I felt, rightly or wrongly, that I had the sanction both of Comte's fundamental principles, and of the constant tendency of his progressive religious genius. When, however, towards the end of 1906, I announced that I was going to celebrate this Christmas Day service, there were murmurs of dissent from some of my supporters. The most eminent murmurer was Dr. Ingram. He had been, as I have said, not only a supporter, but a generous eulogist of such bits of work as I had attempted to do; and his encouragement was of the more value to me because it came from a man of mind and distinction. He had himself, it is true, done nothing openly and directly, during his long life, for the realization of Comte's religious conceptions; and it was actually not till his latest years that he became known to the general reading public as a Positivist. Still, in our little Positivist world he had a certain prestige, both because of his high intellectual quality, and because of his being one of the small number left of Comte's original disciples. His decided opposition to my Christmas celebration was, therefore, disconcerting to me; and as his was the only reasoned

A Christmas Service.

protest against it that I received—as distinguished from mere dissent—and as it probably represented the views of other Positivists, it seems right to give here his letters containing it.

A PROTEST FROM DR. INGRAM.

38, Upper Mount Street,
Dublin.
December 18, 1906.

Dear Mr. Quin,

The reason for my protest against your programme of services for the close of the year is the attempt to introduce as a Positivist Festival the commemoration of the Nativity of Christ. This project seems to me entirely at variance with the ideas of our Founder. It is known that he considered the question whether the name of Jesus [I prefer to call him so, because "Christ" is an official title, and suggests what is, I think, untrue, namely, that this personage fulfilled the national anticipation of a Messiah] should appear in the Historic Calendar, and decided it in the negative, on the ground of his claim of Godhead, and the degradation of character which that claim implied. Besides, Comte held that Jesus is a *faux fondateur*—that St. Paul was the true founder of Christianity. The origin of Catholicism he always associates with Paul, and, accordingly, in the permanent religious Calendar—the *Tableau Sociolatrique*—also, the name of this equivocal personage is absent, and Paul is the first in the list of those who represent the Catholic system. If Jesus were to be regarded as the real founder, he ought to appear along with Moses and the other foremost leaders of the race in both Calendars, instead of being altogether omitted. The addition of a new Festival to the recognized list is a proceeding which in my judgment is not open to the leader of a Positivist group; and it cannot be justified in the present case by a hypothesis as to what Comte would have done had he lived longer; for there was no conviction more deeply rooted in him than that of the moral inferiority of Jesus personally, and the radical viciousness of a Religion founded on an immense egoism [however useful that Religion may have been for many generations in the hands of Paul and a judicious Priesthood]. I hope this—as I regard it—retrograde step is not the fruit of a weak desire to conciliate Christians by a compromise and an apparent agreement; if it were, I think I know in what spirit the concession would be received; it would only tend to confirm the belief, recently reproduced by *The Times*, that Comte at the close of his career returned to Catholicism, or to favour the view of Matthew Arnold that the Religion of the future would be a modified Christianity. I cannot

but regard the proposal as a serious and dangerous error, and have therefore felt it my duty to protest against it.

Believe me to be, dear Mr. Quin,

Sincerely yours,

JOHN K. INGRAM.

A LETTER OF RUPTURE.

38, UPPER MOUNT STREET,
DUBLIN.
December 21, 1906.

DEAR MR. QUIN,

I cannot at all admit the propriety of the attitude assumed in your letter just received. Unlike the religions of Inspiration and Revelation which preceded it, Positivism is a Religion of Demonstration. Not even from our Founder can a *Hoc volo ; sic jubeo* be accepted in place of proof, and still less from any one else.

As you are responsible for your teaching, I also have a responsibility for teaching to which I lend material support. You believe the action you have recently taken to be " justifiable and desirable." I do not think it either the one or the other. In my judgment, it contradicts both our Founder and our Faith, and this on a matter which is not subordinate, but vital and fundamental. I am, therefore, unable to continue to you the small measure of pecuniary aid which I have hitherto given. I send you the amount which I have led you to expect at the present time, but with sincere regret must apply, for the future, the sums supplied to you half-yearly to the furtherance of the Religion of Humanity in other ways more accordant with my convictions.

Believe me, notwithstanding our divergences,

Your earnest well-wisher,

JOHN K. INGRAM.

Other Opinions.

It is not necessary, after the lapse of so many years, to say much in criticism of Dr. Ingram's letters. They are an essay in sectarian pedantry. I give them here because they enter into that picture of my apostolate—of an attempt to construct order out of disorder—which I am trying to paint. It would, however, be untrue to say that my Christmas Day celebration brought me nothing but expressions of dissent. Our little Positivist world was, as I have shown, a world of uncertainty and conflict. Some who disagreed with me, and even separated from me, on account of other matters,

agreed with me, as it happened, in regard to Christ. Albert Crompton—whose opinion was then worth more to me than that of any other Positivist—wrote to me: "A line to express my sympathy with you—in your influenza and other troubles. Poor Ingram! It is a pity. There is so much that is good there. It is very disheartening." A little later he wrote again: "I won't say anything about Dr. Ingram's defection. The *principle* of the incorporation of certain institutions and practices of Catholicism with Positivism seems to me to be admitted *specially* in our Festival of the Virgin, and *generally* in every page of Comte's teaching. And this principle admitted and made clear by our practice, the use we make of it after that is a question which, however important, seems to me secondary." From others I had expressions of opinion more or less similar. The actual discourse on the occasion of our "Nativity" service was given by my friend Eustace Charlton.

CHAPTER XIII

POSITIVIZING CATHOLICISM

RELIGIOUS Positivism is, in principle, as I have said, a "positivization" of Catholicism. That is to say, it takes from Catholicism—considered as a creation and expression of the mind of Humanity—a number of its great conceptions, symbols and institutions, and assigns to them a positive, or scientific, sense and use. It is, in fact, a fundamental and complete Modernism, understanding the Modern Mind—meaning by this not a merely recent mind, but the developed and mature mind of Humanity—as distinctively and above all, a mind of science. In this positivization of Catholicism, as I hope I have made clear—I differed from Comte and my fellow-Positivists not in the least in principle, but only in application and in degree. They carried the process of religious positivization up to a certain point; I, rightly or wrongly, carried it a stage or two farther. They, for example, carried it as far as the positivization of the idea of the Virgin Mother of God; I carried it as far as the positivization of the idea of God itself. They celebrated the Festival of the Virgin Mother; I celebrated the Festival of the Nativity.

A Difference of Degree.

I did not, however, stop there. When we have once entered on such a course of development, one step naturally leads to another. This was what Comte found when, after having cast away religion—the greatest, according to his own view, of his "colossal mistakes"—he recovered it, and insisted that it was the most necessary of all things. It was not, of course, an abstraction that he thus recovered; it was the concrete and practical thing called Catholicism; and when he had

The Logic of Development.

once re-introduced the fundamental word religion into his positive vocabulary, he immediately found himself obliged to re-introduce also a whole host of its derivative words.

The Eucharist in Catholicism.

In exactly the same way, when I had celebrated the Positivist Festival of the Nativity, I was led forward to the celebration of another and greater Festival. That Festival was the Mass. I was not, in principle, positivizing Protestantism—which Comte decisively reprobated, and excluded almost entirely from religious commemoration; I was positivizing Catholicism; and the centre of the Catholic worship—the centre, too, as a consequence, of its doctrine and discipline—is the Mass. He himself says of the Eucharist that it is the "incomparable condensation of the religion of St. Paul," and declares that the Religion of Humanity also needs a similar condensation. He provides it, as he supposes, with such a condensation not in a sacramental ceremony, or rite, but in what he calls the "Utopia of the Virgin Mother." According to that conception, it is allowable for us to suppose that in some remote, ideal state of man it will be possible for a woman, by a sort of independent nervous reaction upon herself, to produce offspring—as some low organisms produce them—without sexual congress; and although it may never be possible for us to actually realize this miraculous parthenogenesis, our moral progress, Comte holds, may be made to consist in a continuous approximation to it.

Comte's Utopia.

It is obvious that this Utopia of the "Virgin Mother," is even more a Utopia of the Virgin Father, for, under it, assuming its realization, the husband would become only a detached and sympathetic spectator of his wife's processes of procreation—a kind of Positivist St. Joseph. In the idea of the Virgin Father there is, of course, nothing new. God, as Christians conceive Him, is a Virgin, or spouseless, Father. He is not a Zeus. Christ also is a Virgin, whose virginity has played a great and high part in the Catholic imagination and life. If, therefore, the object of Comte's Utopia was the absolute nullification, or transcendence, of sex, that object—whether

a desirable one or not—is one which Catholicism, in degree, and in its own way, has always pursued, and which it pursues when it presents to us Christ in the Eucharist as the Divine, or ideal, Virgin Man, whom we are all, men and women, in some sort, to imitate. On the other hand, if Comte's Utopia is only a kind of biological chimera—a mere human parthenogenesis—according to which one physical process in generation would take the place of another, it is clearly not a spiritual conception at all—to say nothing of its extravagance. It is, in fact, a negative, not a positive, Utopia, both by its name and nature.

Positivism and the Eucharist.

Catholicism—partly, perhaps, because of the saving grace of Paganism which has worked in it—has always been, in a high degree, spontaneously positive and human, in spite of its "supernatural" doctrine. In the Eucharist it offers us a bit of bread to eat; and bread is at least a part of the visible positive life of nature, which comes into existence, on the one hand, because of the solar system set in the universe, and on the other, because of the constructive mind and action of Humanity. It requires no great exercise of spiritual and poetic imagination to transform this bit of bread, so coming to us, into the body and blood of man, or Humanity, without which, in fact, it would not come to us at all; and it is an obvious elementary truth of science, or of common sense, that on the body and blood of man rests his highest nature—his distinctive governing soul and will. If, then, Christ, positively and poetically considered, is a divine, or ideal, Humanity—and it was the Positivist Congreve who, in his Service Form, quoted the words of Christ as the words of Humanity—it seemed to me plain that the Catholic Eucharist was an institution of worship waiting, and indeed calling aloud, for positivization, being almost wholly "positive" already by its form and instruments. In rejecting it, while taking possession of almost all the sacraments which derive from it meaning and value, Comte "threw away a pearl richer than all his tribe." He made this mistake because of two others of his colossal mistakes—the attempt to cast Christ out of Catholicism, and the conception of

Positivism as a " new religion " of which he himself was the Founder.

This is not the place for the great argument. I am only touching on it now in order to make the story of my religious work, as far as possible, clear. I came to the positivization of the Eucharist because I had, in fact, as a " religious " Positivist, been doing nothing, first and last, except find arguments for the positivization of Catholic conceptions and institutions. If these arguments—Comte's, Dr. Congreve's and my own —were all a mistake, that, of course, is an end of the matter ; but if they were sound and strong, as I supposed them to be, then it was by following their logic that I came to see that the positivization of the Eucharist proceeded naturally from the positivization of so many other " theological " ideas.

Positivization.

Another thing that helped me to see and feel this was our altar. An altar was, as I have shown, one of the things that Dr. Congreve had brought in pretty late in his development. It was to him the altar of Humanity, comparable with the " altar of the country," and it symbolized, above all, self-sacrifice. I had no objection at all to an altar—not as much as the compilers of the Anglican Prayer-book appear to have had—and when we bought the stock-in-trade of an Anglican church I was, as I have confessed, glad that it included this among its other " effects." When it was once set up it began to exercise an influence on me. I made it as Positivist a thing as I could—a symbol of conceptions such as no altar had ever symbolized before—and there, for a time, I left it. When, however, we were redecorating our Eskdale Terrace church, an artist friend of mine, to whom I was showing the building—not, as it happened, a Positivist, but a Unitarian—said to me abruptly : " What do you do at your altar ? " It was a pregnant and disturbing question. I had, in fact, not " done " much at the altar except stand or kneel at it. An altar, however, historically—in Catholicism as in the religions of the ancient world—has been a place at which men have " done " things. In Catholic language,

The Altar as Teacher.

it is the place for an "action"—the conversion of the substance of a piece of bread into a God, and the subsequent mystical and symbolic sacrifice of this God. Even in Anglicanism the altar has been at least a Holy Table, to which people have come for Communion.

A Positivist Mass.

The Catholic God, Christ, as I had now fully realized, was simply Humanity, mythologically or poetically conceived in a personal form, and worshipped as divine. It was from this point of view that I had instituted the Festival of the Nativity; and it was from the same point of view that I now decided to "do" something at the altar, and positivize the Mass. It was my last attempt—or, strictly speaking, my last attempt but one—at fulfilling the programme with which Dr. Congreve had started us in Newcastle—"the Positive Religion as the Completion of the Older Beliefs." It was, for me, another essay in the direction of his "Catholicism plus Science." I was, of course, abandoning nothing that was Positivist—any more than Comte abandoned philosophy when he converted it into religion, or abandoned science when he said that he had "risen above" it. I was—in my own conception at least—simply adding to our Positivist possessions. We had always had the Sistine Madonna hanging above the altar. I now placed Holman Hunt's "Light of the World" side by side with it. We had for some years had a small crucifix; I now substituted for it a large one. I had long officiated in a cassock and surplice, instead of a frock-coat; I now adopted the vestments necessary for Mass and Benediction, and secured the requisite vessels and instruments. I had, from the first, been accustomed to manufacture service forms as they seemed to me to be required. I now manufactured a last one, in which I gave—partly in Latin, partly in English—the essentials of the Catholic Service, associated with some obviously Positivist prayers and an explanatory preface. But all the "Positivist" things which our church contained before it contained still; and when, following precedent, I provided a receptacle in the altar for a "relic," the relic which I chose and placed in it was an original copy of one

of Comte's "Annual Circulars," which he had despatched with his own hands.

The Responsibility of Initiative.

In celebrating my positivized Mass and Benediction—positive in principle and intention, but Catholic in form—I had, of course, to act on my own responsibility, and at my own risk and peril. I had now no ecclesiastical superior, and there was no one to whom I felt that I could, in relation to such matters, look for counsel. Dr. Congreve was gone, with almost all the older Positivists, including Henry and Albert Crompton, Thomas Sulman, Dr. Ingram, Mr. H. D. Hutton, and others. Our little Positivist world was becoming empty of distinguished figures; and, in fact, no men equal in power and eminence to its early protagonists have arisen in it since. But I cannot feel at all sure that my Positivist Mass would have appealed even to Dr. Congreve. He himself insisted, almost *ad nauseam*, on the "Mediæval Church" as the great commanding type which was to inspire and guide us; but his own essays in the "positivization" of Catholic worship were, as I have said, of a hesitating and tentative character—partly, perhaps, because of his cautious and moderate temper, and partly because he had to appeal to others less "religious" and more critical than himself. It must be remembered, also, that all his experiments in "ritual" took place after he was sixty years of age—a time of life when it is wonderful if men enter on difficult and venturesome changes, and not wonderful if they limit them.

Dissent and Secession.

In any case, when I shaped and instituted my Positivist Mass I had to think and act alone—as, indeed, I had necessarily had to do in almost every step which I had taken in the development of our worship. No one could do my own work, as I conceived it, except myself; and I had no doubt at all that it was the work that had to be done. But, of course, in doing it I had to depend on the assent and co-operation—spiritual and material—of others. Sometimes the co-operation was given without the assent. I have still in my mind the image of a friendly and honest workman—a thinking Freethinker—

who with his own hands voluntarily helped to build up our new "Catholic" altar, and then, when our first Mass was to be celebrated, sent me a letter deploring my "changes," and ending his connection with the Church. He was a Secularist who had supported me from the first, because of his sympathy with Positivist social and political teaching; but although he had borne with a good deal of ceremonial he could not bear with the ceremonial of the Mass. It was the last straw. Another and still dearer friend—the most generous of all my pupils and supporters—cheerfully gave me the money I needed to bring in Mass and Benediction, but would not countenance them with his presence. They were, he said, "not Positivist." On the other hand, hardly any one expressed approval of this new essay in "positivization." In principle, I had it all to myself, although I had still the support of the small household company—almost the only constant elements amidst an incessant ebb-and-flow—on which I had had to depend for steady co-operation from the first. My Mass and Benediction were, to put the history of the thing in the fewest and frankest words, a dismal failure.

Positivism or Catholicism.

Such as they were, however, they were followed by another, and final, step in "positivization." When one or two of my critics told me that my Mass was not "Positivist," the immediate effect on me was to set me thinking a little more fully and exactly on the meaning of the word Positivism itself. It was, as I have said, a fundamentally ambiguous term, representing contradictories—both religion and no-religion; and first one, then the other, of its antagonistic senses played upon our minds, with a sort of reciprocally nullifying, or neutralizing, effect. No wonder that some of my pupils—who had naturally by this time become my critics—were confused by it; I had been confused by it myself. But I now began to ask myself whether it was not desirable to get rid of this equivocal word—or, at least, in Comte's language, to "rise above it." If Positivism was really, as Dr. Congreve had declared, "Catholicism plus Science," why should it not be called Catholicism rather than Posi-

tivism? It is true that the word Catholicism itself is an ambiguous term. All sorts of people use it in all sorts of senses. We humans seem incapable of devising words which are unmistakably luminous and exact. Still, Catholicism is historically and evidently a religious word. Ambiguous as it is, it is at least not so ambiguous as to represent both religion and no-religion. It is, too, a word of universality, older than an exclusive Roman Catholicism, and capable of outliving it. If, according to Dr. Congreve's formula, Positivism was science operating upon Catholicism to discern, preserve, and complete its positive contents—so as, using another of his expressions, to constitute a "Human Catholicism"—then it seemed to me that the right word with which to denote this complete religious synthesis was not Positivism, but Catholicism. Such a name would at any rate make it clear that we were not a revolutionary sect, but—what we claimed to be—a development. After all, there was nothing absolutely fixed in our name. Comte himself sometimes called his religion the "universal religion," sometimes the "Positive Religion," sometimes the "Religion of Humanity," and sometimes simply Positivism. I came to the conclusion that if Positivism really represented a new mind exercising a transforming ascendancy over an old thing, we should indicate this most surely by calling it Catholicism. There can, however, be nothing absolute in either term. Perhaps we may permit ourselves a variant on Pacian, and say "Catholic is my name; Positivist is my surname."

Aids to Worship.

No sooner said than done. I had ordered new notice-boards when we needed them, and I now had another and last one made, on which I described our little edifice as "St. Paul's Catholic Church." But I did something else. Besides the new notice-board, I produced a new book, called *Aids to Worship*, in which I tried to explain what I was doing and why I did it. It was especially intended, of course, to help those of my friends and supporters who were honestly perplexed by my later proceedings; but indirectly it appealed to a wider public. My few Positivist readers, I think—or almost

all of them—found it unconvincing, although, as it happened, one of the kindest words I received concerning it was from Mrs. Congreve. My non-Positivist readers were partly puzzled, partly hostile and partly sympathetic. One of my personal friends, the "able editor" of a provincial newspaper, labelled his review of the book "From Positivism to Catholicism." My Jesuit critics made no such mistake. They said that whatever the author might call himself, he was a "Rationalist," which, in their use of the word Rationalist—itself not an unambiguous term—was true. The most discerning and interesting word on my bit of work came from Father Tyrrell, with whom I was then in correspondence. He wrote to me saying: "I have been reading your book, trying to make out where we disagree. At root, I believe we mean the same thing." He was then engaged in his conflict with the Catholic authorities, attempting, I suppose, to make Catholicism "positive," as I was attempting to make Positivism "Catholic."

I failed, as he failed. I ended, as I began, with dissent and secession. My first formal secession, as I have recorded, turned on Henry Crompton's use of the innocent word "Being" to denote Humanity; my last arose from my institution of the Mass as a Positivist ceremony. "Very few and very weary," says Macaulay, speaking of the *Faerie Queene*, "are those who are in at the death of the Blatant Beast." Very few and, I am afraid, very weary, were those who were in at the death of my Apostolate—at least of those who were present at its commencement. Defections, if they did not spring from one cause, sprang from another—sometimes the word "Being," sometimes the word prayer, sometimes the more fatal word "submission," sometimes a surplice or a crucifix, and sometimes even the harmless, necessary "grunting of the organ," as a discontented ex-Presbyterian Scotchman once described it to me.

Causes of Disagreement.

I have had to use the term "secession" to describe the action of the few persons, men and women, who became, as we said and supposed, "members" of our Church, and then withdrew from it. It is, of course, the wrong

term to use. They did not "secede" from our Church, for the simple reason that there was never any Church for them to secede from—and this whether we called our place of meeting a "Positivist Room," a "Church of Humanity," or "St. Paul's Catholic Church." A Church is an organized society of men and women, with a common and settled religious doctrine, modes of worship and conduct in correspondence with it, and a spiritual government, freely accepted. Of such a Church we may be rightly said to become members, and from such a Church we may, for reasons good or bad, secede. We, of course, were never a Church in this sense. We were only trying to become a Church. We were a centre of Positivist teaching, with certain liturgical "illustrations," or accompaniments. We followed Dr. Congreve's method—or his later method—of associating the exposition of doctrine with practices of something that we called "worship." But we were always imprisoned in a vicious circle. The worship was supposed to be in some sort an expression of the doctrine; but the doctrine was never settled—either in the mind of Comte himself or in the minds of those who considered themselves his disciples—and the worship was only an experiment, varying according to the two or three little so-called "Churches," which introduced it. That was all.

Churches and Secessions.

Under such circumstances there can be no real "secessions." But, whatever they ought to be called, these desertions meant for me a loss of moral co-operation, and, in some instances, of essential money support. Dr. Ingram's example was contagious. When I mentioned his cessation of his subscription to one of my principal supporters—who was also, as I supposed, a personal friend—he said cavalierly: "Oh, I might do that." At the time, I thought this was only a joke, but sure enough, shortly afterwards, he "did" it, and our little enterprise suffered another substantial loss of resource. One or two, moreover, who still continued to give me a generous and indulgent help nevertheless dis-

Stopping of Subscriptions.

agreed with me while they gave it. Lastly, some of the original subscribers to my apostolic subsidy informed me that they could only continue their contributions on the understanding that I would endeavour to secure an equivalent for them from those who were more in agreement with me. I am not blaming them. I am only telling a story. They had probably come to consider me an "unprofitable servant," mistaken in matter or method, or perhaps in both. It was all very natural. It was a part of the "disorder" out of which we were to make "order." I was only experiencing what Comte and Dr. Congreve had experienced before me. I must admit, too, that I was not always as discreet in speech or action as one occupied with so high and perilous an enterprise ought to have been. When I was criticized I criticized, and when I was hit I hit back. "Sweet reasonableness," does not do such things; but even He who, according to Matthew Arnold, was the great exemplar of sweet reasonableness, did a certain amount of striving and crying. He was not invariably mellifluous. However, my situation was a difficult one—both for me and for those who had to bear with me. "Self-suppression," said Dr. Congreve to me once, "has made me ill"; but perhaps some of those who disagreed with him thought that he did not suppress himself enough.

Facing the Situation.

I was, then, at the end of thirty years of my Positivist "apostolate," compelled to consider, not whether I should continue it—for I never had the slightest inclination to abandon it, or disavow it—but whether it was possible and desirable for me to continue it in its present form. I was fifty-six. I had now no means of religious action, or even of subsistence, except such as were voluntarily accorded to me by those who were, in whatever degree, sympathetic with my work. The mere material problem of life itself had become a more serious one since the time when I elected to live on a narrow fixed income. The "Great War" has taught many of us what it means to exist on such an income in a world of increased taxation and rising prices. We had had no "great" war since my acceptance of my small subsidy,

but we had had the Boer War, and even that was great enough to make life more difficult for those who have to scrupulously consider shillings and pence before they can spend them. When I accepted my apostolic income, moreover, I am afraid I took little account of such things as rising prices, or the growth of children, or the cost of education, or doctor's bills, or unavoidable travelling expenses, or unforeseen domestic responsibilities due to death. I did not even anticipate a time when ill-health would compel my wife to end her thirty years' voluntary service as our organist, and we should have to pay for a substitute. As it happened, however, we had to face all these difficulties, one after another; and some supplements to my small income soon became inevitable. What weighed upon me most, however, was that I was, in a religious sense, companionless; and this at a time when the nature of the developments to which I had committed myself necessitated an increase rather than a decrease of force and co-operation. Like my master, Dr. Congreve, and his master, Comte, I could see no one to continue my work.

This must be my apology—and an apology really seems to me to be needed, at least to myself—for the conclusion to which I had to come. I issued the last of my circulars, announcing to all whom it concerned that I had decided to cease my church work. This decision was condemned by no one. No one—or hardly any one—perhaps, lamented it. One of my oldest subscribers, who was also one of my oldest critics, declared that it was a wise decision. There were not many to be interested in it, one way or another. It was not a catastrophe to any one except myself. To me it meant the end of a thirty years' effort, into which I had put the best of my life, and an end coming when I had, or seemed to have, the vision and hope of a greater beginning. It was for me, I am afraid, a moment of stoic and dreary resignation.

Finis.

My last day—the day of our last services—was on Sunday, March 13, 1910. We had our Positivist "Mass" in the morning, and "Benediction" at night. I had told

no one—not even my wife—of my intention to close the church. I could not speak of it. I could not speak of it even when I preached my last sermon, and looked from my pulpit upon the little temple which represented so long a time of fruitless labour. It was, I suppose, a temple of Modernism. If it had no other title, it had at least the distinction of being unique. There has, so far as I am aware, been no other such church in the world's history. There have been Christian churches in which there has been no place for Positivism; there have been Positivist churches, two or three, in which there has been no place for Christ. In my little church, such as it was, there was a place both for Christ and Positivism—both for the Supreme Figure of religious imagination and poetry, and the supreme construction of modern synthetic thought. Above the altar, as I have said, hung Holman Hunt's "Light of the World," side by side with the Sistine Madonna. On the altar was the Tabernacle; but with it there were the seven lights of Comte's seven sciences, and the "relic" contained in it was, as I have mentioned, a copy of one of his annual circulars. One of our side altars was dedicated to Comte himself. About the walls of the church were the busts of his Historic Calendar, and either in the church itself, or in the adjoining Lecture Room, we had his "Tables," and a collection of the Positivist Library.

Last Services.

But such as this church then was—the last and greatest of my "experiments," to use my former word—I had to bid it farewell. It was an unspoken farewell. No one knew about it till it was over. It was a farewell of the mind only. Its only outward symbol was locking the door for the last time. This was the end of my Positivist Apostolate, so far as it was an Apostolate carried on by means of preaching, prayer, and ritual. But I had come to love my little church, and had given to it too much sympathy, hope and labour during a whole generation not to feel forlorn and disheartened when, as I finally turned the key upon it, I realized that, after having so slowly built it up, I must now proceed to pull it down.

The Farewell.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

My first business after having, in this way, finally locked the door of my church, was to take steps for getting rid of it. It was now a church in the market. Naturally, less time was needed to dispose of the building than it had taken to erect it, and fix upon it the character which had been given to it. Among my Newcastle friends was Father Horace Mann, Head Master of St. Cuthbert's Grammar School, and a historian of the Popes. He is now a doctor and Monsignor, and holds an educational position in Rome. He was, and he is, a straightforward and capable human being, with whom it is possible not to agree, but whom it is impossible not to respect and admire. Partly by his instrumentality, I was able to get customers for the goods which I had to sell. They had, most of them, a "Catholic" stamp upon them, and so it was natural that they should pass into the hands of Catholics. The shell of the church went to the Convent of St. Marie Reparatrice, Osborne Road, Newcastle. It was re-named "St. Joseph's," and is still, I suppose, to be seen in the grounds there. Our vessels and vestments found a purchaser in the Prior of St. Dominic's. Our organ went to the Convent of the Good Shepherd at South Gosforth, where the quiet nuns were so alarmed at its loud tones that they had to call in an organ-builder to temper them. Our historic busts I presented to the Newcastle Grammar School, where my son received part of his education. In one way or another, by sale or by gifts, we cleared off our whole stock-in-trade. Lastly, our site was sold to the Jews, who erected a synagogue on it. Thus the church of the "New Religion"—to use the "Positivist dialect," which,

Selling a Church.

according to John Morley, editors did not love—passed, bit by bit, into the possession of "Mediæval Catholicism" and the "Initial Theocracy."

A Fish out of Water.

While these transactions were in progress, I was casting a scrutinizing, but dismal eye upon the new situation in which I found myself. I was now a fish out of water. In my mind, so far as fundamental principles were concerned, I was exactly what I had been before: I was a Positivist—that is to say, I held, as I had held since my teens, that man's view of the universe and of himself must, in the modern world, be derived from science. I still held, further, that of this modern scientific synthesis, Comte, by the very nature of his work, was the principal voice and organ. But I had now no Church, and my fellow-Positivists, for the most part, appeared no longer to recognize me as one of themselves. What I had said and done seemed to them not to be "Positivism." I therefore stood alone. I was without the support which we derive from being members of a community. It is true that the Positivist community was an exceedingly small one, and that, as I have shown, Positivists were in a state of perpetual disagreement with one another. Some were for religion and some against it; some "religious" Positivists denounced other religious Positivists as sophists and traitors; and of those who professed in principle, to be religious, some held that it was premature to set up anything in the nature of prayer and ritual.

One of the Unemployed.

Still, the fact remained that so long as I described myself as a Positivist, called my Church a Church of Humanity, and had not carried my positivization of Catholicism as far as the positivization of the Mass, I had a certain measure of support from a few Positivists, and could express my religious convictions by preaching and worship. All this was now at an end. I had therefore to ask myself what I was to do. Having been a sort of priest for so long a time, it was not easy for me all at once to cease to be a priest in instinct and imagination. I could put off the chasuble and put on the frock-coat again, but I could not at

a bound get rid of the temperament which made it as natural for me to put a religious argument into forms of worship as it is for an artist to give forth his message of beauty in line and colour, or for a poet to cast his vision into song. Moreover, my religious argument was, in essentials, not a new one. I had the same cause as before, and the same wish to serve it. I had even—or at least thought that I had—a power of service increased by a long experience, and by the wider outlook which such an experience, when it is accompanied by intellectual activity and development, ought naturally to bring with it.

Positivism in the Churches.

There was nothing, in principle, to prevent me from taking service as a minister in any Church that was willing to have me, provided always—an indispensable and all-important proviso—that it would accept me on my own terms. Those terms were that I should be allowed, avowedly and openly, to preach Positivism. It may seem that it would have been extravagant and absurd to expect this, yet Matthew Arnold, for example, had continued to receive the communion in the Church of England after having declared that the existence of a God was undemonstrable, and that the idea of the Trinity was comparable to a fairy story of three Lord Shaftesburys. The Churches, moreover, were in a state of flux. Even Rome had thrown up a Modernist movement. Father Tyrrell, its chief protagonist and voice in England, had, as I have said, read my *Aids to Worship*, and had written to me: "Why don't you come in and help us?" In the preface to that book, moreover, I had expressly said that there seemed to me nothing to prevent the conscious scientific development, or "positivization" of the Roman Catholic Church, or any other Church, from within, when once that Church had decided to accord the liberty necessary for such a development.

I felt, therefore, that I was free, in principle, to take service in any Church, if only I were allowed to continue in it that avowed "positivization of Catholicism" to which I had been devoted, with ever-increasing consciousness and completeness, for thirty years. Holding this conviction, I

consulted one of the most eminent of Anglican ecclesiastics on the subject, sending him, at the same time, a copy of my *Aids to Worship*. It was another of my experiments. His reply was sympathetic and friendly, but not encouraging. He declared that it was impossible for any one with the views expressed in my book to be a minister in the Anglican Church, and suggested that I should be more at home as a layman among Roman Catholics. I could not, and do not, complain of this answer, although it showed that he had not understood my book. It was, under the circumstances, natural, and perhaps inevitable. I had thought it worth while to make my "experiment," but I was not surprised or disappointed at the result. The Church, Catholic and Protestant, is in a difficult and paradoxical position. It can only preserve itself and fulfil itself, in a positive and human sense, by becoming a Church of science, yet for it to completely and openly act on this principle may easily seem impossible.

An Anglican Ecclesiastic.

I was, however, not yet at the end of my experiments of this order, although I made them, one and all, with a doubtful mind. One of my acquaintances at this time was the Rev. C. E. Osborne—now Canon Osborne—Rector of Wallsend. I should best describe him, I suppose, as a "Catholic-minded" Anglican Modernist. He is a scholar and thinker—a man of remarkable intellectual breadth and keenness, and is well known among other things, for his *Life of Father Dolling*, and for an able volume published during the war. If high capacity and a vigorous independence were qualifications for the episcopate, this brilliant Irishman would long since have been a bishop. Apparently they are not. Canon Osborne was sympathetic and helpful to me at the time when I was pulling down my church, and I think it was at his suggestion that I made some approaches to the English "Old Catholic" body. The head of it at that time was Bishop—or as he had then become—Archbishop Mathew. He was a somewhat imposing, if not a distinguished, figure, but he eventually, I think, brought a

Canon Osborne.

certain discredit upon himself by the imprudence of some of his ordinations.

Archbishop Mathew.

With Archbishop Mathew I had some little correspondence. After reading my *Aids to Worship*, he sent me a long letter—too long to give here—which I am afraid I thought characterized rather by a laudatory and extravagant sentimentality than by anything in the nature of critical insight. However, he made it clear that he would welcome me as a minister of the Old Catholic body, if I decided to join it; and, with a view to my ordination, he put me in communication with one of his bishops. This bishop also sent me a friendly letter. I soon, however, came to the conclusion that "Old Catholicism" offered me no field. It was not an old, but a new Catholicism that I wanted. On the other hand, I was, and I am, more in agreement with Rome than with any critics of Rome, Protestant or Modernist, who stop short of science, and simply oppose their own theological or metaphysical authority to hers. The two chief points on which the Old Catholics differ from Rome are the celibacy of the priesthood and papal infallibility. The celibacy of the priesthood is a question of discipline, and as such is to be decided, in whatever way, by the Government of the Church—not by private adventure. As to the infallibility of the Pope, it is of the essence of Catholicism, considered as the organic voice of the "supernatural," and I have myself attempted to formulate a positive argument in support of it.[1]

Bishop Herford.

My "experiment" with the Old Catholics, therefore, like my experiment with the Anglicans, was a failure. What I wanted from them was not a truncated orthodoxy, but liberty for science in the interests of religion. This they could not give me, because they did not possess or understand it. My investigations and adventures at this time brought me into relation with another bishop, representing another phase of our theological and ecclesiastical distraction. This was Bishop Vernon Herford, a cousin, I think, of

[1] *Catholicism and the Modern Mind*, p. 237.

Professor Herford, of Manchester University, an old Positivist correspondent of mine. Bishop Herford was—and I suppose still is—a sort of bishop by himself, as I had been a sort of priest by myself. He was not a Roman Catholic, nor an "Old Catholic," nor an Anglican, nor, I think, a recognized priest of the Greek Church. He called himself an "Evangelical Catholic," and derived his orders from some remote Eastern body. His "bishopric" was "Mercia," and he had a church of his own in Oxford. As a result of our correspondence, he came down to Newcastle to visit me, and I showed him my church before it was dismantled. I found him personally kind and agreeable, but his "Evangelical Catholicism," and his "shortened form" of the Nicene Creed, no more appealed to me than any other theological variant on Rome. What I had in my mind was something greater growing out of something great. Positivism, as I conceived it, represented this; "Old Catholicism" and "Evangelical Catholicism" did not.

Father Tyrrell.

With Father Tyrrell I was in greater intellectual affinity than with the Anglicans, the Old Catholics or the Evangelical Catholics. He was, in fact, by insight or by foresight, more at my own standpoint—the standpoint, once more to use Dr. Congreve's formula, of "Catholicism plus science." He had, at any rate, a critical and independent mind, and had a genius for religion, while being a keen and restless searcher after truth. My correspondence with him carries me back to a date somewhat earlier than the actual closing of my church. Several of his letters to me have been printed by Miss Petre in her excellent *Life of Father Tyrrell*—which follows on his *Autobiography* —and in other works. I need not, therefore, give them here. It was, I think, my interest in a little book of his called *A Much-abused Letter* which originally caused me to write to him. I believe I had at first, as others had, the impression that this was an actual letter written to an actual correspondent, instead of being what it really was, a sort of symbolic fiction, founded on fact.

Fact or fiction, this letter made me see in Father Tyrrell's relation to Catholicism, as I have said, a sort of inverse

analogy with my own relation to Positivism. He was the priest of a great and ancient Church, trying to reconcile it with the mind of the modern world; I was a priest, *faute de mieux*, of a little new Church, trying to shed the light of the modern mind on ancient forms. He, too, was undergoing excommunication at the hands of his old and great Church, as I was undergoing it, in a way, at the hands of my new and small one. This gave us a ground of contact. It was a paradoxical relationship, for I had gained from Comte a singular conservatism which made me disdainful of anything that smacked of mere criticism or "revolution"—Protestant, metaphysical or even scientific—while Father Tyrrell wrote to me: "When you speak of 'revolution,' I am not quite clear as to your meaning. There is surely a sense in which revolution is the *sine qua non* of spiritual and social progress."[1] I have some recollection of having written to him that I would rather be a member of the Society of Jesus—that body to which Comte addressed his appeal for a universal Religious League—than of the House of Commons. Since then, I am afraid, my estimate of the Society of Jesus has gone down, while my estimate of the House of Commons has not gone up.

The Meeting of Extremes.

Father Tyrrell died in 1910. He did not live to read the last letter which I sent to him. I felt his death as a personal loss, because although his mind—once more using Positivist terminology—was rather "metaphysical" than positive, he was metaphysical with uncommon breadth and boldness, and was pressing forward into the light. Since his death, so far as I know, there has been no Modernist Catholic priest in England comparable with him in intellectual distinction and courage. He was, while he lived, a link between Rome and the minds outside of Rome who, being scientific in standpoint, yet saw in Catholicism what Comte saw in it, the prophecy and preparation of a new and enduring order of religious life. As it happened, however, two or three years after Father Tyrrell's death, I was brought into momentary rela-

After Father Tyrrell.

[1] *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell.* By M. D. Petre, II, 412.

tion with an Italian Catholic priest, who also was an able and well-known Modernist. I think I wrote to him about the question which Father Tyrrell raised when he said to me: "Why don't you come in and help us?" This priest's view of the question is still interesting and significant enough for me to give his reply. For obvious reasons I suppress his name. His French, of course, is an Italian's French.

LETTER FROM A MODERNIST PRIEST.

Décembre 1913.

CHER MONSIEUR,

J'ai assez bien compris votre lettre. Peut-être je comprendrais mieux si vous écrirez un petit peu plus clair! Merci de la confiance que vous me témoignez. Je voudrais bien m'en rendre digne. Je n'ai pas encore eu le temps de lire votre *Aids to Worship*, mais je crois comprendre assez bien, d'après votre lettre, votre esprit. Vous rêvez, dans le bon sens du mot, un Catholicisme humain [Dr. Congreve's word]—qui soit ouvert à toute l'humanité, capable de l'embrasser. Tel était, sans doute, le Xsme de Jésus. Il était ouvert à tout le monde, à la différence du Judaisme, borné à une race. Peu à peu le Catholicisme s'est rétréci; il est devenu trop latin, trop romain, trop moyenage. Il faut, qu'il devienne *large*, large de cœur et d'esprit. Il doit y avoir de la place même pour les savants, même pour les critiques. Lui-même le Catholicisme ne doit pas enseigner la critique, mais il ne doit pas repousser les critiques sincères, travailleurs, chercheurs de vérité. Si on le fige dans des formules scholastiques, formules empreintes de la pensée du M. Âge, on le rend impossible à un esprit moderne. Saint Paul n'a jamais demandé à quelq'un pour l'accepter dans le X/me: Êtes vous aristotélicien ou platonicien? Il lui a demandé: Aimez vous le Christ? Aimez-vous tout ce que le Christ représente: la vérité, la justice, la charité? Il faut revenir à ça; il faut démontrer que l'Église Catholique peut et doit arriver à ça.

Si nous sommes d'accord sur ces points, et vous me demandez si vous pourrez travailler plus franchement pour cet idéal où vous êtes maintenant ou bien où je suis moi, je vous dirais: moi je suis réduit au silence pour autant qu'on peut y réduire un homme qu'on ne tue pas. Après cela jugez vous même où il y a pour vous une plus grande chance de travail fécond. Il faut de travailleurs partout. Peut-être l'heure est venue de répéter la parole de S. Paul: *Unusquisque in quâ vocatione vocatus est in illâ permaneat.* L'Église du futur ne sera ni l'Église Anglicane ni la Romaine, telle qu'elle est aujourd'hui. On gardera les grandes lignes du Catholicisme actuel: sa ferveur, son esprit de charité profonde, son interna-

tionalisme, son indépendance du pouvoir spirituel vis à vis du pouvoir politique, mais il y aura plus de liberté, d'humilité.

Écrivez-moi. Bien entendu, notre correspondance nous regarde nous seuls.

There was in this letter, as is clear, no encouragement to act on Father Tyrrell's suggestion as to "coming in" to the Catholic Church to help the Modernists, even if this had been, for me, on other grounds, possible and desirable. My experience in relation to these various Christian Churches, in fact—Roman Catholic, Old Catholic and Anglican, to say nothing of the "Evangelical Catholics"—was almost exactly the same as Comte's experience in relation to the Jesuits when he proposed to them to form a universal Religious League, in order to preserve society from dissolution. Perhaps I, following my Master, made my Master's mistake of expecting from men still dominated by metaphysic and sect a capacity to enter into the new mind of Humanity. It may, be, after all, that the Christianity of the modern world, like the Paganism of the ancient, must "dree its weird"—actually pass into complete impotence and collapse—instead of suffering a "sea-change into something rich and strange," and voluntarily linking old and new in a developed harmony. Carlyle, a forlorn and desolate spirit, observes somewhere, I think, that perhaps three hundred years must elapse before out of the religious chaos of the modern world a higher order will arise. One of Comte's chief French disciples, Dr. Audiffrent, wrote to me that his Master himself, on his death-bed, had said to him: *l'anarchie ira loin.*

Churches of Anarchy.

Who can decide as to these great matters? I had, however, when I had pulled down my own church, to come to the conclusion that there was no other Church open to me as a minister. The Positivists would not have my "Christianity"; the Christians would not have my Positivism, which was still as robust and stubborn a Positivism as it had ever been. I was compelled, therefore, for one thing, to accept the position of a common lay worshipper in the Catholic

A Place for the Positivist Worshipper.

Church. In doing this, again, I was only acting in conformity with the prescriptions of Comte, who wrote to one of his American disciples that in the absence of a Positivist Church in New York, he would do well to attend the services of a Catholic Church. Indeed, one of my own financial supporters—who more, perhaps, than anybody else had contributed to making the continuance of my services impossible—wrote to me on my retirement suggesting that I should go to a "well-appointed Catholic church" for my spiritual satisfaction. I cannot say that I followed his advice, because in any case I should have done this. I was, as I have shown, always by instinct a worshipper—as a small boy in my early Anglican days, as a Freethinker, or Agnostic, when those days came to an end, and ever afterwards as a Positivist. If I am not so much a worshipper now it is because, since the Great War, I find it almost impossible to dissociate the good and beauty of worship from the stupidity, selfishness, and spiritual incapacity of the Churches.

In 1910, however, the Great War had not actually come upon us, although even at that time the various European Governments were actively engaged in preparing it. I then began, therefore, that regular attendance at Catholic services which I have more or less continued ever since. Into these services I carried, of course, and have always carried, a Positivist mind, if by a Positivist mind we mean, for one thing, one which seeks and finds the human and scientific value of "theological" conceptions and symbolism. In this one respect, at least, my attitude in a Catholic church was exactly the same as it had been in my Positivist church. I had been accustomed for thirty years to see in the language of the *Imitation*, for instance, or in that of St. Augustine, Dante, St. Francis of Assisi and the great Popes, an expression, poetic and indirect, of subjective realities—the underlying realities of the mind of man in its constructive relation with the external universe and with itself. I saw exactly the same thing in the same way when I was present at Mass or Benediction. I believe I may claim that I have been—

"Once-ers and Twice-ers."

or that I was—tolerably diligent and constant in my attendance at these functions. Mr. Gladstone, I remember, spoke depreciatingly of those whom he called " once-ers," meaning by that those who only went once to church on Sundays. He said he preferred the " twice-ers." Well, I may venture to say that I was for a long time a twice-er as regards the Catholic Church, to say nothing of Holidays of Obligation, which I have also scrupulously observed.

The Positivist in the Catholic Church.

I do not, of course, consider that there was the slightest merit in this. A Catholic church was, and is, for me a Positivist church—or to use my old words, a " Church of Humanity." Why not? All churches, all images of God, all poems of God, all arguments of God, all forms of worship, all modes of religious life are, of course, constructions and representations of man as, according to his development, he sees himself in the universe. To a religious Positivist, therefore, every church, Christian or non-Christian, is, or ought to be, his own, although it does not follow from this that he puts all historic Churches equally high. If he follows Comte, he puts the Catholic Church highest. Matthew Arnold, in the same way—to whom the doctrine of the Trinity was the fairy story of the three Lord Shaftesburys—declared that " the Catholic worship must prevail because it is the most poetic." This is the sound Keatsian principle that " first in beauty should be first in might." These things being admitted, I was naturally as regular in my attendance at a Catholic church as I used to ask people to be in their attendance at a Positivist church.

St. Dominic's, Newcastle.

The church to which I usually went, so long as I remained in Newcastle, was St. Dominic's. It is a big building of, I suppose, the basilica type—lofty, long and dark. The Dominicans are, as is well known, a preaching order, and in my experience they are not unworthy of their reputation. But they are also, I think, masters of the art of worship. It has, I believe. been said of St. Dominic's, Newcastle, by a high musical authority, that the Gregorian services there were the best out of London. Certainly they usually seemed to me to

give evidence of study, care and sound artistic feeling. When I was in France in 1912 I attended services in Paris at Notre Dame, the Madeleine, and the Sacré Cœur at Montmartre. In going south, also, I heard Mass at Lyons, Marseilles and elsewhere, and in returning to Newcastle was present at Mass and other offices at Westminster Cathedral. I question, however, whether I anywhere heard services which appealed to me more than those at St. Dominic's. They were—or they appeared to me to be—dominated by an instinct for the great imaginative things of Catholicism, and for the right way of expressing them in musical form.

Congregational Singing.

It is one of the advantages of High Mass that it excludes all congregational singing. It is an advantage which, it is to be hoped, will long be preserved to it. It is a great good from the religious point of view, because it is helpful to imaginative vision and spiritual concentration in the worshipper, and it is a great good from the point of view of musical and dramatic art. I am not, of course, an enemy to congregational singing. It has its place, and is sometimes highly effective and inspiring. But High Mass is, in principle, the greatest of all acts of worship, and its art should be of corresponding greatness. Congregational singing, from the nature of the case, is frequently the singing of people without voice, ear or training. It is often a rude and boisterous performance, suitable, perhaps, for Anglicanism or Dissent —although I admit that it could never, at its worst, be worse than the hymn-singing I have heard at some Catholic churches. But to High Mass, from the time of Palestrina, the greatest of musicians have dedicated noble music; and the mob—if that is a right word to be used by a Republican and Socialist—should be kept out of it. The main object of worship is to express and educate our sense of perfection, and common bawling is not an aid to this. Even silence—the " unheard melodies " of Keats—is sweeter than such " heard melodies."

Catholic priests—perhaps in the pages of the *Tablet*—sometimes discuss the question of whether Low Mass is preferable to High Mass. Historically speaking, I suppose,

Catholicism rests rather on Low Mass than on High, if music is to be our measure of such things; but, of course, what is argumentatively important in the Mass is not whether it is High or Low, but the miracle that is worked in it. The power to work this miracle, according to the metaphysic of Catholicism, does not depend on music; it depends—so far as Historic Christianity is concerned—on acceptance of the Papacy. As a consequence, Anglicans and other Protestants do not possess it. This miracle—the conversion of the "Substance" of bread and wine into God in Christ—naturally makes the Tabernacle the centre of attraction in a Catholic church, and gives to both Mass and Benediction a significant mysticism. Protestants sometimes laugh at the idea of the infinite God being enclosed in a box, or carried in the monstrance, but these good Protestants have no difficulty in believing, or professing to believe, that this infinite God was once contained as an invisible and microscopic embryo in the womb of the Virgin. Any one who does a little scientific thinking in a Catholic church can see that Protestantism, as an argument or as a poem, is, as compared with Catholicism, simply nowhere. In practical morals, of course, there is nothing to choose between them. The Quaker, without any sacraments, is as good a man, when he is a good man, as the Catholic who has seven, or the Anglican who has two.

Low Masses and High.

A number of Rationalists, Freethinkers, Agnostics—or whatever they are to be called—have, I dare say, sometimes attended the services of the Catholic Church. They have done so, perhaps, from motives of history, philosophy or art. Grant-Duff, for example—a well-known Liberal statesman and student of the later nineteenth century—records in his diary a good many Masses at which he was present, preserving, no doubt, a critical aloofness and independence amidst his sympathies. Probably, however, not many persons have attended Catholic services regularly for fourteen years, and remained throughout convinced and unchanged Positivists. This is what I have done. I could not, in fact,

Freethinkers and Catholics.

have attended these services, being, in regard to theology, what I am, if I had not been a Positivist—a disciple of the scientific thinker and freethinker who, during all the later years of his life, used to go once a week to pray in the baptistery of St. Paul's Church, Paris. Of course, any one who so goes to a Catholic church does his own thinking in it, and preaches his own sermons. Catholics naturally do not understand Catholicism—if by understanding a thing we mean a scientific apprehension of its origin and place in nature and human nature. They affirm a number of things concerning God and the soul, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory and Indulgences, and they affirm them with unhesitating confidence and victorious certainty. But, of course, of what they affirm the ablest and best instructed of them knows no more than the most ignorant and incapable. In such nescience there are no degrees. It is always absolute and complete.

Priests and Preaching.

Nevertheless, after having heard a large number of preachers, Catholic and Protestant, I prefer the preaching of the Catholic priest. He has frequently not the individual force and distinction which are to be found in many Anglican and Nonconformist ministers. He is not in relation with the mind and life of the modern world. He has no intellectual spaciousness or freedom. He has ordinarily, even, no sense of the human and social greatness of his own cause. In many years' experience of a number of Catholic churches, in various places, I have, for example, seldom heard a sermon on the wonderful history of the Church, or on the great story of its thinkers, saints and religious orders. But of the mind of the Church—the mind of Catholic Humanity—as a mind of dogma and argument, the priest is usually an effective exponent. He may be arrogant, intolerant, violent, denunciatory, unpersuasive, but he knows what he ought to say, and commonly says it with readiness and efficiency. He is an expert of controversy, and having the *ipse dixit* of the Church at his back, has usually no difficulty in disposing of its Protestant opponents, each of whom denies supernatural authority to the Papacy but claims it for himself. I do not mean by this, of course, that there are not many

Catholic priests wholly admirable in insight, knowledge and charity.

Happiness in Fairyland.

But I do not profess that I was happy in the Catholic Church. I was not as happy in it as I had been in my own little church—in spite of my scanty congregation of critics, always on the point of dissent and secession. I was not as happy in it as the average Catholic may easily be, and probably is. He is happy, if he is happy, because he is a member of a Church which has not grown up. He is a child, living in fairyland. In an early part of this story I have said that I, personally, did not cease to be a Christian because I had a quarrel with Christianity—or, to use a better word, with Catholicism. What is wrong with Catholicism, considered as a thing of belief and choice? If I am a Catholic, I may not, it is true, be actually happy, so far as "this world" is concerned, but this world is to me, in principle, of no importance. I may be a sinner, but I can secure pardon on comparatively easy terms. I may be diseased, poor, ignorant, and I am subject, as are all my fellow beings, to evils of the natural order, and to various forms of social affliction and misery. I know, too, that inevitable decay is coming upon me, and that death, sooner or later, awaits me. But what are these things to me? I am inspired by a transcendent hope. God is preparing me for an eternal Paradise, and whether I die now or forty years hence, I can, by conforming to certain rules which are by no means onerous, secure admission to it. If belief brings happiness, this is happiness. And it is not just to call it a selfish happiness, since the redemption and felicity which are promised to me are promised to all who will take them.

Symbols and Science.

In the Church which has not grown up, therefore, a man—so long as he also has not grown up—may be happy. But the modern man—the word "modern," once more, being a word not of chronology only, but of thought and development—has grown up. He may or may not be happy, but he has ceased to be a Catholic or Christian in the old sense. He has come out of fairyland. In a Catholic church you may conceivably

be happy if you believe with the belief of the Middle Ages, but not if you have the knowledge and reason of a modern Humanity, for these things are not represented in it; and even if in themselves they bring you no happiness, you can no more disown them than the clothed and civilized man can revert to the nakedness and paint of the primitive savage. In the worship of Catholicism the modern mind may see the poetic symbols of great and enduring truths, but Catholicism itself does not thus understand and present these truths. It has the seed, but not the fruit. In my experience, Catholic churches have commonly had remarkably large congregations, both for Mass and Benediction, but—allowing for conspicuous exceptions—they have usually, in this country, been composed of the least cultivated part of the community.

The Inventor of Cerebos Salt.

As I was—by no choice or merit of my own—not mediæval, but modern and a Positivist, I missed in a Catholic church the things of a developed Humanity, and could not, as I say, be happy in it. The things that I had to say and do could not—as my Catholic correspondent had pointed out—be said and done in it. I had, therefore, to continue the work of my life, as well as I could, by writing. My *Aids to Worship* was followed by *Catholicism and the Modern Mind*, published in 1912. I was encouraged to proceed with this book and complete it by an old Newcastle friend of mine who is now dead. This was George Weddell—known in the business community as the inventor of "Cerebos Salt," and founder of the company which organized its sale throughout the world. Weddell was not a Positivist. He had, in fact, some quaint philosophic notions of his own—drawn partly, perhaps, from Herbert Spencer—and used, at one time, to teach them in a singular little school in a Newcastle slum. But he was sympathetic with me in my Church work, and most of all sympathetic when I was compelled to end it. One summer Sunday night, as I was walking home forlorn and disconsolate from St. Dominic's, he met me and told me that if I was writing anything and needed money help in publication, I could depend on him. It was for me a

moment of resurrection. As it happened, I did not then need this particular kind of help, but this good little friend of mine spoke the word of new hope to me at a moment when such a word was vital. It is of the things that are not to be forgotten.

"Catholicism and the Modern Mind."

In *Catholicism and the Modern Mind* I did only in a new way, of course, what I had been trying to do for thirty years—"positivize Catholicism." I did now by an argument alone what I had previously attempted to do by an argument supplemented by worship. Of course, too, I now addressed a larger audience. With the encouragement and advice of an able Catholic friend of mine, I prefaced the work with a letter to Pope Pius X, and I sent a copy of it to his Holiness, with a personal letter in Italian. Whether such seed, so sown, and in such a field, was likely to bear fruit may appear doubtful. My book has had its friends and its critics. Some of the latter, like the critics of *Aids to Worship*, appeared to think that the author was a convert "from Positivism to Catholicism." Others, but these were Catholics, condemned it, as the former book had been condemned, for its "Comtist prejudices." But all Catholics did not so regard it. One of them, who was sent to prison for a political offence, told me some years afterwards, how things said in it concerning prayer had been a consolation to him in his confinement. In our modern world, with new books and new arguments presenting themselves to the anarchic human mind every day, who can say what books and arguments are helping to shape the mind of the future?

Progress in Religion.

The argument of *Catholicism and the Modern Mind* is simple; it is—first, that Catholicism, as against any form of Protestantism, properly so-called, or against any theological Modernism, is all-powerful; second, that as against science it is powerless; third, that if there is to be any organized religion in the future, continuous with religion in the past, it must be a scientific religion, "positivizing" and completing Catholicism, as the chief historic and representative religion of mankind. My book was a contribution to the conscious

and systematic positivization of Catholicism from within. Whether there will be any such positivization I shall not venture to say. I still hold, however, that the movement of religious progress—in so far as there is one—is in this direction, and that in proportion as the various Churches, Catholic and Protestant, fail to enter into it, they will eventually perish, with only this difference that the Catholic Church will perish last.

A Visit to France.

In 1912 I spent a month in France. I wanted to move in the footsteps of Auguste Comte, with a view to a study of his life. For this purpose, after a few days in Paris, I went to Montpellier, his birthplace, and some other southern cities associated with him, returning for another and longer stay in Paris. I had introductions to some Modernist priests and laymen there, and had a good deal of talk with them. I remember one of them condemning the later policy of the Vatican, on the ground that it threatened to give the Pope the place of God. I thought then, and think now, that this is not a sound reason for objecting to it. For the purposes of a positive Catholicism, it is necessary to give the negative word "God" —as theologians use it—a scientific and human significance. This to some extent has been done by the doctrine of the Incarnation; and the Catholic Church, of course—the "Body of Christ"—is a developed Humanity, organized for religion. It is, in other words, the Social and continuous Christ, and the Pope is its visible personal Head, the living and apparent equivalent of God. Is this too much "positivization," I wonder, or too modern a Modernism? Or is it, after all, just "Romanism"? Comte also believed in a Pope, only, as we have seen, his Papacy was to be seated in Paris, instead of Rome.

Things Positivist and Catholic.

In Paris I looked at the things of religion from a double standpoint, which was yet one—the standpoint of my "Positivism" and my "Catholicism," both words, as I have admitted, being ambiguous. Among other places, I visited 10, Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, where Comte lived in his later years, in lonely poverty and heroic constancy, and where he died, dreaming of the

spread of his "New Religion." I also went on pilgrimage to his grave in Père-la-Chaise, and I saw, as I have said, the empty Positivist church, built by the Brazilian Positivists a good many years ago on the site of the house in which Clotilde de Vaux lived and died. It was then, and perhaps still is, waiting for a congregation. But I also visited some of the sacred places of Catholicism. Among these was St. Paul's Church, where Comte paid his weekly visit for prayer, along with Notre Dame, where I heard High Mass, and knelt in the nave to kiss the ring of Cardinal Amette. From a musical point of view, what impressed me most was the two organs, one high up in the west end and one in the choir, answering each other. I heard there, too, what I have heard in no other church, and should like to hear again in a religious service—a solo sung to a harp accompaniment, or obbligato.

Baron von Hügel.

Coming back from France, I paid a visit in London to Baron von Hügel, so well known in the religious world for his treatise on *The Mystical Element in Religion.* I had sent him my *Aids to Worship*, and in return for that little book he had been kind enough to present me with his two learned volumes, and to write me a friendly criticism of my own work. I found him in his study in Kensington, and had a pleasant talk with him—or perhaps I listened, getting a few occasional words into his ear-trumpet in reply. I remember he appeared somewhat disappointed at my youthful appearance, which was rather, he said, of the "late thirties" than of fifty-eight. It doubtless seemed to cast discredit on one professing to be occupied with grave interests. Baron von Hügel was then numbered—and may still, for aught I know, be numbered—among "Modernists;" and if erudition and research can give distinction, he is entitled to a high place among them. But my experience of the Catholic Church has left me more convinced than ever that there is only one Modernism of real importance, and that is the Modernism of science and Comte, going to the root of the matter.

CHAPTER XV

LABOUR AND PEACE

During the thirty years in which I had been at work in Newcastle, trying to form a Positivist Church, a movement had grown, and grown great, throughout the world which we in England call the Labour Movement. Its aims, of course, were no new aims to a Positivist. Long before it arose, Comte had declared that the two supreme connected tasks for us moderns were to give religion a new doctrinal foundation in positive science, and to raise the Proletariat—the vast mass of human society—to the level of life and culture hitherto reached only by the few. With these two tasks I, as a disciple of Comte, had always been occupied. The Labour Movement was concerned with only one of them. Its one distinctive aim is practical—to make wealth, which is social in its origin, social also in its distribution. Comte expected the socialization of industry to come about by the free action of capitalists, systematically transforming themselves into social servants under the influence of a human and scientific religion. That has not happened. Labour has no such expectation. It sees politics as what they are—a continuous struggle—and feels that it can only accomplish its own emancipation by its own strength.

The Labour Movement.

In this country the Labour Movement, as a Socialist movement, has centred in the Independent Labour Party. It has been not only a Labour Party, but an international Peace Party, recognizing—what Comte also recognized—that there can be no Socialism without peace. I did not, and do not, love the party mind, any more than I love the sect mind. These

The I.L.P.

two causes of the Independent Labour Party, however, were my causes; and just as—after the closing of my church—I attended Catholic services without being a Roman Catholic, so I became, for a time, a member of the Independent Labour Party, and went to its Newcastle meetings, without being a partisan.

At St. Dominic's.

It was a singular experience. I had been used for many years to my own church. It was a little church, with a little congregation, but all the same, there were gathered together in it the symbols and instruments of universality. In some small degree, too, beauty was stamped upon it—the beauty, at least, of the poets, of music, of art, of great memories and great purposes, of everything that naturally enters into the vision and pursuit of human perfection. That may seem an extravagant thing to say; nevertheless, it is strictly true. At St. Dominic's, again, I had an imposing and spacious church—actually much smaller in its range of human representation than my own little church had been, but still great with the greatness of the religious history which it summoned up, and in its noble and poetic services. Its celebration of High Mass was almost always worthy and inspiring. On Sunday evenings Compline was sung as it had been sung by the Dominicans for some seven hundred years. Benediction, also, was an impressive and appealing rite. It set before us the glory of the Resurrection, and exhibited God as a visible Divinity, throned amidst lights, flowers, music, and incense, and looking down upon a vast company of worshippers. There was as a rule at this church—especially at night—a great congregation, in appearance at least, orderly and reverent.

At a "Branch" Meeting.

The "services" of the I.L.P.—that is to say, the ordinary weekly meetings of the Newcastle "Branch"—were a different thing. They were fixed to begin at half-past seven, and as Positivism, among other things that it had done for me, had educated me in the virtue of punctuality, I made a point of being present at that time. This meant that it was ordinarily necessary to wait at least half an hour for an

audience. About eight o'clock, perhaps, one or two premature stragglers slouched irregularly in, and sat expectant of others to come. After another interval, we became some sort of a "meeting," and proceeded to hear reports or discuss "resolutions." Most of the men in the scanty audience commonly sat smoking, and spittoons were arranged about the room for their convenience. In some respects this I.L.P. meeting carried me back to the little Secularist gatherings which I had attended in Leicester some forty years before. In the mid-Victorian age, however —which we of the twentieth century are accustomed to look down upon—the smoking mania was not so deep-rooted and omnipresent as it has since become. It had its lucid intervals. Even the Freethinkers of that time—many of them working men—could discuss great human questions with something of the order and self-command of a church, and without pipes or cigarettes. We have changed all that, and, I presume, call the change progress.

Religion or Labour.

This I.L.P. branch meeting, such as I have sketched it, was in my experience—an experience extending over three or four years—typical. Out of the tens of thousands of the "Proletariat" in Newcastle a dozen persons, perhaps, were ordinarily gathered together to smoke and talk in a somewhat squalid room, for the purpose of putting an end to "capitalism" and bringing in the "social revolution." Yet the I.L.P. has been described, and rightly described, as the soul of the British "Labour" Movement. In its usual meetings it has none of the ceremony and grace of a church, but it proposes to itself purposes such as no Christian Church has ever pursued. It holds at least two of Comte's ideals—a risen Proletariat and a world at peace. With religion, as such, it does not concern itself. Its members are of all religions, or of no religion. In itself it is neutral and secular. It works not by the Church, but by the State. Its aim is to create a governing "majority," a dominant political force, to bring in, if not a new heaven, at least a new use of the earth. Of the two pictures which I have painted—St. Dominic's and the I.L.P. Branch meeting—it is St. Dominic's

that lives in my mind as a thing of beauty. Nevertheless, it is not Catholicism in its beauty, but "Labour" in its ugliness and incoherence, which is somehow stumbling forward to a nobler social life.

Labour and the Great War.

On several occasions I lectured for the members of the I.L.P. in Newcastle or elsewhere. They were good comrades all, and generous to me. The only one of these meetings, however, which I now recall with interest was one in which I was not a speaker. The speaker was Ramsay MacDonald. It was, I think, in the first year of the Great War. The I.L.P., like other parties and sects, in England and elsewhere—not excluding the Positivists—was divided in mind about that human catastrophe. The cry of the "country"—that is to say, of the dominant class or faction which happens to wield the power of government at a given moment—was too powerful for some of its members. The I.L.P. was known, and is still known, as distinctively the "pacifist" part of the Labour Movement, but that is only because its dominant spirit has been the peace spirit. During the war it had its dissentients and seceders. MacDonald's visit to the Newcastle Branch was, of course, after he had resigned his leadership of the Labour Party in Parliament as a consequence of the war. It was a critical occasion. The meeting was crowded and excited. There was a little, but only a little, opposition to him, and his speech—a wise and courageous pronouncement in war-time on behalf of the wisdom and courage of peace—soon silenced the murmurs of disagreement, or converted them into enthusiastic acquiescence.

War and Peace.

I was, of course, against our entry into the war, as I had been against the Boer War. I never had a doubtful mind about it. I am, however, not what is now called a "Pacifist"—at any rate, in the illusory, or Quaker, sense of the word. I am not opposed to the use of force, where it is necessary for the accomplishment of such right human purposes as it can achieve. If I were, I should be opposed to the administration of justice, and all government. I am only opposed to it for the accomplishment of evil ends, and such ends—the greater ends of

human life—as can be best accomplished by teaching and persuasion. I was against our participation in the Great War because it was—as almost all wars have been—a war springing out of a policy of competition in greed and aggression, and because Great Britain—which has followed such a policy throughout its history—had, by its own action and example, contributed as much as any other country to bringing it about. I was, on these grounds, so opposed to it that, if I had been younger, I should, I suppose, have had to go to prison for refusing to take a part in it. As it was, I could only sit silent and helpless, looking at the drilling of the troops in the town where, for thirty years, I had preached peace.

Lord Morley on the War.

One or two small things I managed to do for the relief of my own soul. Among the members of the Liberal Government who resigned office as a protest against our entry into the war was John Morley—or, as he had by this time made himself, Viscount Morley. It was thirty years since I had been in somewhat free and intimate relation with him as his election agent in Newcastle, when our talk was not always about his candidature, but sometimes about literature and Positivism. During that time he had occasionally sent me a friendly word, and I now wrote to him to congratulate him on leaving the Government, although I felt that he would have played a bolder and more beneficent part if he had left it sooner. He sent me a line of reply, and I give it here because it serves to place on record the judgment of the wisest colleague of Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, and Mr. Lloyd George—"arch mediocrities," as Disraeli might perhaps have called them—on the policy by which they had plunged the country, in the name of Liberalism, into the worst war in history.

FLOWERMEAD,
PRINCES ROAD,
WIMBLEDON PARK, S.W.
August 12, 1914.

MY DEAR QUIN,

I am sincerely obliged to you for writing to me. It is encouraging. We can only wait till the criminal blundering has been exposed by the event.

Yours sincerely,
M.

Last Words from Morley.

My last words from Morley came to me only a few weeks before his death, and I give them here because they were the last. I had sent him a little piece of writing of mine, in memory of our relations in Newcastle forty years before. The old man acknowledged it in the following line, written in a handwriting which his eighty years had rendered somewhat shaky. Between 1883 and 1923 many things had happened in which he had played a foremost part. I still think that the things he said and did before he went to the House of Commons were more significant and interesting than the things he said and did there—after he had become less of a Positivist and more of a politician. I am glad, however, to have had what, as it happened, were his farewell words to me. There is a touch in them of his characteristic sombreness.

FLOWERMEAD,
PRINCES ROAD,
WIMBLEDON PARK, S.W.
June 3, 1923.

Thank you, my dear Quin. I am truly glad to have this kind salutation from you. I hope that the world has behaved as well to you as it ought. But life's road is apt to be rough in some of its places.

Yours ever,
J. MORLEY.

Two Books.

Another thing which I did during the war, and against the war, was to write a book which I called *The Problem of Human Peace*. I may, perhaps, be allowed to mention it here because it was—in fact, if not in form—a continuation of my Positivist "apostolate." It was some sort of an appeal to "the churches"—especially to the Catholic Church, as the greatest and most powerful of them—to make the cause of peace their own, and promote it by placing themselves at the point of view of what I called a "Scientific Catholicism." This, of course, was only another name for Positivism, as I understood it. The *Problem of Human Peace* was followed, two or three years later, by *The Politics of the Proletariat*. The former book was addressed principally to the thinking minds of the churches; the latter

to the thinking minds of the workers, seventy-five per cent. of whom—according to a statement which I recently heard made by an Anglican bishop—do not now "go to church." In the one work, as in the other, I made an attempt to bring Comte's "religion of science," or his sociology, or his "synthesis," or whatever it may be called, to bear on great questions of human order and progress.

Last Work in Newcastle.

There was only one bit of work, having any direct connection with the war, in which I took a part. This was the organization of relief for the distressed families and dependents of soldiers and civilians. For about a year I served on a committee in Newcastle formed for this purpose. During that time I was engaged in visiting a large number of working-class dwellings in one of the poorer districts of the city, and so became more intimately acquainted with the life of the "people" than I had ever been before. The experience was calculated to give one to "think furiously" in a twofold sense. In Newcastle, as, of course, in every large town, there is a small area of decorous respectability, inhabited by "capital," and a vast area where "Labour" toils to maintain this respectability, while being itself, for the most part, steeped in ugliness, ignorance, squalor, disease, and the thriftless uncertainty of the wage-earner, whose whole basis of existence is at the mercy of financial and political gamblers. As I went in and out of the wretched households of the "Proletariat," two things were stamped on my mind—first, the selfish incapacity of the ruling classes, then actively engaged in wasting thousands of millions of capital, and in destroying millions of its best producers; second, the infinite patience, or indifference, with which the workers co-operate in such sacrifices of their humanity. But, of course, we have no right to expect them to be better than their betters.

But life in such an atmosphere of anarchy and helplessness was too great a trial, coming after so many years of anxious apostolic effort. I was moving towards old age. My wife's health, too, was permanently deteriorated. Moreover, such religious work as I could still do could be done as

well out of Newcastle as in it. Towards the end of 1915, therefore, we took our last look at the Tyne—as, thirty-five years before, I had taken my first look at it on entering the city—and went to settle for a time, in the little Cumberland village of Great Salkeld. There we could at least cultivate our garden, and look quietly out upon the green line of the Pennines, waiting for the world to recover its sanity. Whether it has yet recovered it I shall not here undertake to say. In time came the Armistice, and then the Peace and the League of Nations. The League, as an instrument of human concord and co-operation, was inaugurated by the dismemberment, ruin, and enslavement of Germany; and since then its three chief members have shown how they understand the new mind of the world—Britain by her action in Russia, France by her action in Germany, and Italy by her action in Greece. The thorns have not yet yielded their harvest of grapes.

Farewell to Newcastle.

While the war was raging, such of us as tried to preserve a soul of peace had to make the most of any chances we had of correspondence and contact with those who, like ourselves, were struggling to keep themselves above the storm. One of the few with whom I was, in this way, brought into relation was Ramsay MacDonald. I have mentioned the meeting in Newcastle at which I first made his acquaintance. During the progress of the war we sometimes exchanged letters, and on one occasion, when I was living at Great Salkeld, we agreed to meet at Carlisle for a talk. After our lunch, we went and sat by the side of the River Eden, and in the course of our conversation I recollect asking him, "Are you prepared to form a Labour Government?" His answer to that was a simple "Yes." Probably neither of us thought then that he—at that time, and for a good while afterwards, the most unpopular man in England—would so soon be called upon to assume such a responsibility. As I write these words, however, he is the first Labour Prime Minister that England has had, and I sometimes wonder whether he still remembers our talk on the banks of the Eden.

A Talk with Ramsay MacDonald.

CHAPTER XVI

AFTER-THOUGHTS

THE interest and significance of the foregoing pages, if any interest and significance they may be allowed to possess, turn on a single momentous question. That question is the question of how far anything that can rightly be called religion—a unity of doctrine, worship, and conduct—is to have a place in the Modern Mind. By the Modern Mind, as distinguished from the Ancient and Mediæval Minds, I here understand the mind of science. By the mind of science, again, I mean three connected things. First, I mean by it the mind which derives its conception of the Universe and Humanity—apart from all supernatural Belief—from such interpretations of experience, external and internal, as have entered into the great positive sciences, from mathematics to sociology and morals. Secondly, I mean by it a mind which recognizes the difference between supernatural Belief and scientific hypothesis, and between scientific hypothesis and scientific proof. Thirdly, I mean by it a mind which acquiesces in the real discoveries of science, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant, and among them the discovery that there are limits to human knowledge and power which, so far as we can see at present, are not to be transcended. In simple words, the scientific mind, as such, explains what it finds to be explicable, and candidly admits its ignorance in presence of the unexplained.

Religion in the Modern World.

If we understand the Modern Mind in this way, it is evident that the term "modern" is, as I have before insisted, not merely a term of chronology, but a term of development. It denotes not simply what is recent, but what is mature. There are millions of persons in the contemporary world, Christian and non-Christian, who are "modern" in a chrono-

logical sense, but not in development. In so far as they are adherents of supernatural Belief, they belong either to the Ancient world or to the Mediæval. This applies even to a number of scientific men, who are only consistently scientific within the limits of a special line of inquiry, which imposes on them its own discipline of investigation and proof. Outside those limits they may be Roman Catholics, Protestants, Spiritists, or metaphysicians. It applies also to a great body of politicians, who may not be formally "scientific," but who, for purposes of government—whatever their personal opinions—set aside all supernatural Beliefs, and work, as Secularists, in a neutral atmosphere of positive knowledge.

The Meaning of Modernism.

The question of how far religion is to have a place in the Modern Mind, considered as a Mind of science, is itself, of course, a scientific question. It is a question of experience, scientifically interpreted. It is this question which Comte had to consider a hundred years ago, when he entered upon the construction of his "Positive Philosophy." He then answered it, as I have shown, by deciding that religion was a lapsed, or lapsing, thing, and that in the future, its place in the human mind, for all purposes of explanation, education and action, was to be taken by "positive philosophy," regarded as a synthesis of scientific knowledge, and embracing not only external nature, but human nature, social and individual. So far as his "Positive Philosophy" was concerned, therefore, the word "positive" was synonymous with the word "scientific." In principle, it still continued to bear this meaning, along with some others, when, at a later stage, he wrote his *Politique Positive*, or *Treatise on Sociology*. The main difference between this work and his *Philosophy* is that in the latter he pronounced Positivism to be exclusive of religion, while in the former he attempted to found a positive and scientific religion.

Comte and Modernism.

The question to be determined, therefore—the question of the relation of the Modern Mind to religion—naturally, in its turn, falls into two other distinct but connected questions. The first, and smaller, of these is the question

of the actual attitude of the Modern Mind, as a mind of science, towards Comte's religion; the second is, assuming it to reject that religion, what are the probabilities that it will give any place at all to religion, considered as a unity of doctrine, worship, or poetry, and organized action. On both these questions the experiences which I have recorded in these pages have, as is clear, a certain bearing.

The Future of Religion.

Science, as science, it is obvious, has only a theoretic value. It is simply knowledge—either of external nature or of human nature. The practical use we make of such knowledge depends, of course, on the purposes which we propose to ourselves, and those purposes, again, depend on the continuous needs and desires of man, in his total nature, and in relation to his total environment, which is the universe. Comte's *Politique Positive*, regarded as a "treatise on sociology," is, in principle, a work of science. As such, its object is to explain the structure, life, and historic development of human society, and, on the basis of this explanation, to forecast, or predict, its future. The work, however, professes to be not only a treatise on sociology, but a treatise "instituting the Religion of Humanity." Religion, as is plain, is not merely science, or knowledge; it is a use made, or proposed to be made, of knowledge for certain practical purposes. Such a use may be dictated by the common and irresistible needs of man, as a physical and social being, or it may come within the domain of choice and will, and be determined by varying human desires.

Science and Religion.

Comte's *Politique*, being professedly a work of both science and religion, is, in fact, a mixture, as are all his later books. Into this mixture personal genius, romantic imagination, social vision, hypotheses, Utopias, fictions and fluctuating opinions, as well as formal sociology, all enter. The religion in it represents the use which, according to his conceptions, ought to be made of its science. Now, if its social science is held to be sound—in other words, if it is held to be a right reading of man, in relation to the universe—

The Modern Mind and Comte.

and if, further, Comte is held to have made a sound use of that science—as medicine, for example, is assumed to make a sound use of science in its treatment of disease—then he has actually decided the question of the relation of the Modern Mind to religion. He has decided it by giving to that mind a Modern, or scientific, religion which it accepts. It is obvious, however, that the place of that religion in the Modern Mind cannot be determined by any mere claim which Comte personally makes for it, or which is made for it by a few disciples; it can only be determined by the Modern Mind itself, as a social mind, continuously expressing itself on a sufficient scale. The place which, up to the present, the Modern Mind, as a mind of science, has actually given to Comte's religion may be measured in two ways—first, by the degree in which that religion, as a whole, has actually been accepted; secondly, by the movement of life and mind since his time, considered in relation to certain of his specific doctrines.

Positivist "Churches."

Upon the first of these points the story which I have told in these pages sheds its own light. It is now some sixty-five years since Comte's death. During that time four principal attempts have been made to propagate and establish his religion by the formation of a "Church," with something in the nature of a priesthood and public worship. One of these attempts was made by Dr. Congreve in London, the second in Liverpool, the third in Brazil, the fourth by myself in Newcastle, and in missions to some dozen other towns. Taken together, these attempts may be said to represent, directly or indirectly, the whole history of religious Positivism. Setting aside, for the moment, what I have called the Newcastle "experiment," the men and women presiding over them have been of high capacity and culture, and of unswerving courage, perseverance, and devotedness. Of these four attempts two—the one at Liverpool, the other in Brazil—are, at the end of some forty years, still continued, and may be held to have had a certain degree of success, although it is a success which, for various reasons, it is difficult to exactly measure. The other two—Dr. Congreve's

and my own—have been failures. I do not mean by this, of course, that they have not had a certain influence on thought and action. Dr. Congreve, for example, was, beyond all doubt, after Comte, the greatest personal force in the maintenance and development of religious Positivism ; and there are a few persons calling themselves Positivists, scattered throughout the world, who would admit that they owe their " conversion," such as it was, to me. But in Dr. Congreve's case and my own—as in the case of Comte himself—there was failure to form anything that could rightly be called a " Church."

There was also, as I have shown, failure in another sense. In each of these four little communities there has been disagreement and secession. Such success as they may seem to have accomplished has been more apparent than real. Down to the present time it is impossible to say how far they represent a real acceptance of Comte's teaching and prescriptions. In a considerable degree, it is certain they do not. It must be admitted further, as I have already pointed out, that such later adhesions to religious Positivism as there have been have not been among men and women of the same distinction and culture as in the earlier period.

Forms of Failure.

What is true of these four attempts to form Positivist " Churches," with a sort of priesthood and public worship, is true also of the attempt to form what may be called Positivist teaching societies, governed by committees. There are at the present time two or three such societies in existence, in Paris and elsewhere. They are divided from one another in opinion and action, and their total membership is very small. It would hardly be a paradox to say of them that they cannot die, and do not live.

Positivist " Societies."

When we pass from these attempts to form Positivist " Churches " or " societies " to the attitude of what may be described as the general Modern Mind, scientific and practical, towards Comte's teaching, we are forced upon a similar conclusion. Comte, as is well known, deprecated the extension of stellar astronomy, spoke contemptuously

of geology, described political economy as a pseudo-science, gave no place to introspective psychology, and condemned all attempts to construct what he called an "objective synthesis"—such, for example, as are involved in the evolution theory and Darwinism. In all these respects the movement of thought since his time has been against him. On the other hand, although the scientific world has accepted his word "sociology," it cannot be said to have accepted his conception and construction of the science, and, indeed, it seldom mentions them. If he were alive now, he would probably still say of himself, what he said while living—that he was the victim of a "conspiracy of silence." In the same way, his Positive Philosophy, or systematization of the sciences, is disregarded.

The World and Comte.

What is true in the domain of theory is true in the domain of practice, or "applied sociology." Comte assumed that the world in his time was entering on a final state of peace, and dismissed the Crimean War as an "episode." Since his death, however, there have been a number of great wars, including the greatest of all wars. He assigned to France a sort of spiritual presidency among the nations. She has now become one of the chief reactionary and militarist States. He regarded woman as the "moral providence" of the world, defined her normal functions as those of wifehood and maternity, taught that she should take no part in external industrial life, or in the exercise of political power, and that she ought to be maintained by man. He was opposed to divorce, except within the narrowest limits, and condemned even re-marriage; and he insisted on the preservation and exaltation of the family life as the essential basis of social order. Consistently with this, he held that education should be largely left in the hands of the mother in the home, and that under existing conditions only primary instruction ought to be a concern of the State. He pronounced invariably and emphatically for the "separation of spiritual from temporal power," by which he meant, simply and practically, that as little as possible ought to

Applied Sociology.

be done by Government, and as much as possible by free teaching or persuasion.

Woman and Social Life.

What has happened since Comte's time we all know. The Government has taken into its hands almost the whole ordering of society, intellectual and practical. Development among women has had for its result to withdraw them more and more from what was once considered the feminine type and to approximate them more and more to the masculine type. It has been a victory of manhood over womanhood. Woman now claims to be the "equal" of man. She is entering into all industries and professions. She is a competitor of man in the struggle for existence. She is a voter, a member of Parliament, a member of the Government. She is not compelled to marry, and frequently does not wish to do so. If she marries, she often continues to support herself, and sometimes supports her husband. If she is dissatisfied in marriage, she can easily procure a divorce. Even when she becomes a wife she may not, and often does not, choose to become a mother. Her maternity is now limited both in time and function. She frequently does not nourish her children. They go to school at five years of age, and when they leave it have to earn their living—an obligation which, in existing circumstances, commonly carries them to different parts of the country, and perhaps of the world. Under such conditions, the family union is practically dissolved. The tendency of man, in fact, is to become less and less a husband and father, and the tendency of woman is to become as man. She works with him and plays with him, smokes, drinks, swears and gambles with him, and aims at taking a similar place to his in church, school and State. She is as different a being as possible from the ideal daughter, wife, and mother that Comte held in his mind, and proposed to men to worship.

I am, of course, not now expressing any personal opinion as to whether the movements of thought and life since Comte's time have been "good" or "bad." I am only attempting to estimate the attitude of the Modern Mind towards his religion, whether we regard that religion as

founded on a scientific "sociology," or as a body of arbitrary personal prescriptions. Up to the present, it is almost a case of *Athanasius contra mundum.* If the principle *securus judicat orbis terrarum* is sound, and if the judgment of the last two generations represents the world's final judgment, then it is plain that Comte's religion, either as a whole or in regard to many of its assumptions and proposals, can have no place in the Modern Mind. We may admit this, on grounds of experience, even if we agree, as I do, rather with Comte when he seems to be against the world, than with the world when it seems to be against Comte. Renan somewhere says that he expects Positivism to be an *etiquette* with posterity, although he personally holds that, in so far as it accepts Positivism, posterity will "make a mistake." My own position is an exactly opposite one. I do not believe in the literal realization of Comte's vision of a future Humanity, but I nevertheless hold that if it could be literally realized to-morrow, mankind would be in a nobler and happier state than it has ever been in its history. Up to the present, however, I see no grounds for the supposition that "posterity" will accept it.

Positivism and Posterity.

But the second and greater question remains. Assuming that what I have called Comte's religion is, in the form which he gave to it, rejected by the Modern Mind, does it follow that that mind will be without religion, in a positive and scientific conception of it? Such a conception of it can only be derived from our actual knowledge of the nature of man, as a physical, intellectual and moral being, living in the social state, and in dependent relation with the external universe. The word "man," of course, is an abstraction. It represents all sorts and conditions of men, some—according to our accepted standards—of a "low" type, some of a "high." This must be borne in mind in any general statement concerning human nature. If, for example, we say that it is in the nature of man to pursue perfection—the total, harmonious fulfilment of his humanity in body and mind, in feeling, thought and action—and that such a pursuit is religion, then we must

Religion and Perfection.

admit that only a small number of men have ever been religious in this sense. Only a few of them have pursued perfection, even according to the narrow Christian conception of it as a state of "sinlessness." Most Christians—in spite of the awful sanctions of Heaven and Hell—have been contented with what may be called a decent moral mediocrity, and have counted on everlasting felicity in "another world" as a reward for it. Even those who have imposed a severe but simple negative rule upon themselves—the "religious," as they have been emphatically called—have often failed to conform to it.

Religion and Human Nature.

While we must allow for this, however, it still remains true that it is in the nature of man, as we see him in history, to pursue perfection. He has pursued it in the moral sphere by a certain disciplinary lordship over his bodily instincts, by the repression and condemnation of "selfishness," and by the sanction of his higher sympathies. He has, in this pursuit, expressed himself in religion and politics, the Church and the State. Both of these have been emanations and constructions of human nature, and there is no good ground for supposing that that nature has undergone a fundamental and subversive change, even while it has changed in some of its conceptions and ideas. In other words, the positive needs and desires of man, individual and social, which have moved him in the past to create supernatural sanctions of morality, will still exist as a part of his nature, even if we suppose him to have dismissed all his supernatural creations from his mind. If, therefore, religion is the pursuit of perfection—first, and above all, of moral perfection—it seems certain that man, as a modern and scientific mind, will be religious, if only in the somewhat limited degree in which he has been religious as a mind of supernatural Belief.

But the Modern Mind is a developed mind. It is the heir of the experience and culture of all Humanity. In its highest life and expression of itself, it enters into that experience and culture, and takes possession of it, in its totality. It is synthetic. Its view of perfection is proper

to its own age and state. Perfection, according to the Modern Mind, does not consist merely in the repression, or subjection, of certain evil tendencies of body and mind, or even in the mere realization of a certain type of ethical "goodness"—important as such things are; it consists in the complete, harmonious fulfilment of man's many-sided humanity, physical, intellectual and moral, personal and social. It means, for the individual, a right realization and unity of goodness, knowledge, and power, with the material sufficiency and liberty indispensable for such things. It means, a common education—an education in personal conduct, but also in art, science, industry and citizenship. It means, in public life, justice, peace and international co-operation. And if this, according to the Modern Mind, is perfection, religion, according to that mind, will be its pursuit and progressive realization, whether by the few or the many.

Modernism and Perfection.

About so much we may be reasonably certain. About some other things we cannot be so certain. We cannot, for example, be at all certain as to the number of men and women who will ever be "religious," pursuing perfection, in this sense. As under Catholicism, notwithstanding its tremendous "sanctions," only a small number have attempted to satisfy the Christian rule, in any high conception of it, so it may well be that under "Modernism" or "Positivism" or a positivized Catholicism, possessing no such sanctions, only a small number—from the sheer love of goodness, beauty, and truth—will be counted among "the religious." To fulfil oneself, in any high positive sense, may be found harder than to deny oneself. All we can say is that the nobler happiness and well-being of man will depend on the degree in which he proposes to himself, and pursues, such an end.

Certainties and Uncertainties.

A second thing as to which we cannot be certain is as to the relation of this modern religion to Mediæval religion, or historic Christianity. Roman Catholicism, including, perhaps, Greek Catholicism, is in substantially the same doctrinal position as at the time of the Council of Trent.

It is Mediæval; and, in so far as it has developed at all, it has developed in a Mediæval sense. Protestantism is an ambiguous word, but Protestantism has become "Modernist," and Modernism, on its positive side, is at least a tendency to preserve old symbols and institutions, investing them with a new meaning, derived from later experience and knowledge. In such a conception of it, Modernism is so far from being exclusively "modern" that it represents a process visibly at work, in almost every sphere, throughout history. It is, too, a process which is peculiarly appropriate in an age whose master-words are evolution and synthesis. Comte, more than any one else, has shown how easily the religious constructions and terminology of the past—the poetry of its supernaturalism and the art of its worship—lend themselves to the purposes of a "new" religion. No one can say how long the Christian and non-Christian religions, in their present forms, will endure, but it is more in accord with all human experience that they should be "modernized," or "positivized," rather than that they should become extinct.

The Future and the Past.

A third thing about which we cannot be certain is, as I have already said, the degree in which Comte will be accepted as a mind and instrument of the modern religion. It is a thing which only the future can decide. It cannot be decided by an exclusive discipleship, although a free discipleship, working independently of any existing Church, may, by a scientific and catholic use of Comte's teaching, make an important contribution to the future of religion. Moreover, if the religion of the Modern Mind, whether for the few or the many, is to be a religion of perfection—in the sense which I have assigned to this word—then Comte ought naturally to have a high place in it. He is actually the original genius and artist of such a religion, and has the distinction of having—alone among modern thinkers—conceived it as a synthetic whole, and dedicated his life to its construction. So much may safely be said about him, on grounds of historic justice and dispassionate criticism.

The Place of Comte.

Human Possibilities.

And, finally, assuming that for the Modern Mind religion means the pursuit of a many-sided positive perfection personal and social, we cannot be in the least certain as to how far such a perfection can ever be realized. Its realization—if only in a limited degree—demands, as is clear, the exercise of a twofold power. It demands the exercise of a power of self-discipline and self-fulfilment in the sphere of human nature, and of a power of self-preservation and mastery in the sphere of external nature. Within what limits the exercise of such a twofold power is possible only experience can decide. Man, as a conscious reason and shaping will, is, as is obvious, a dependent being. He is not an absolute lord either of his own body and mind or of the forces of the outer world. He is at his best and highest an artist, who can only realize his conceptions in subordination to himself and his materials. Even if we suppose him—an extravagant supposition, of course—to gain a complete directing mastery over himself, as a being physical, intellectual, and moral, pursuing high ends of love, beauty, truth, and power—still, he is not, and can never be, a sovereign over external nature. The stars in their courses take no account of him. The sun gives, or refuses, light and heat without reference to him. The wind bloweth where it listeth, sometimes bringing him nourishment and health, sometimes famine and devastation. The tornado, the tidal wave, the earthquake, the volcanic eruption, the thunderstorm, droughts, gales, and deluges—these play havoc with the constructions of his genius and toil; and, according to the later anticipations of science, in some infinitely remote future the curtain will ring down upon a lifeless earth, and the tragedy of an extinct Humanity.

Catholicism and Pessimism.

It is considerations such as these which are working in the Modern Mind—giving rise, perhaps, in some cases to a forlorn and desperate indifference to everything except an immediate material self-satisfaction, and in others to a reversion to some form of supernatural Belief, if only such a form as Spiritism. Such a reversion is intelligible. Man is the prisoner of the

universe. It is, on a certain view of it, a noble and inspiring habitation, but it is also often menacing and awful, breeding in him a sense of isolation and helplessness. All supernatural Belief—especially, of course, the belief in "immortality"—may be said to represent a continuous attempt to escape from this prison, or to master and transcend its forces. It is, in Keats's words, the place "where men sit and hear each other groan." Catholicism, or historic Christianity, is a natural pessimism, with a supernatural hope. It is, in regard to the world and man as we know them, a confession of human inability and frustration, but it is also a promise of unending ascendancy and perfection in a magical after-life. The wonder is, not that it should have grown and established itself in the human mind, but that that mind, in its modern development, should have come to turn upon it a cold process of explanation and dismissal. Catholicism, it is true, has never brought to man light and power for the life which he has actually had to live in the world. It has not, as a supernatural Belief, enabled him to explain the things which he needed to have explained, or do the things which he needed to do. It has, however, seemed to him to make him a master over death, and to transform him ultimately into a lord of Heaven. It has been a Poem of Humanity in the Universe.

Metaphysic and Life.

For the Modern Mind, however, as a mind of science, it is, as a Belief and doctrine, dead, and with it, we may be reasonably sure, will die all later and lesser forms of supernaturalism, which have a smaller coherence and beauty than Catholicism, and represent either a narrow sectarianism, or the fluctuating hypotheses of individual minds. Under such conditions, it may be said, and is said, that human life is not "worth living"; and that religion, as the pursuit of perfection, can have no attraction or power. The metaphysicians who say such things exaggerate the importance of metaphysic. Man, of course, does not live because he has constructed an argument in favour of life, but because he is a living being; and all experience shows that, with rare exceptions, he clings to life tenaciously not only under the

most widely-differing religions, but even under conditions of what would seem to be utter misery and hopelessness. According to the Psalmist, man is a being only " a little lower than the angels " ; according to Pascal, he is a *roseau pensant* ; according to Shakespeare, he is the " quintessence of dust " ; according to Carlyle, he is the " clothed animal " ; according to Darwin, he is the descendant of an ape.

Man and Law.

But however man may conceive and describe himself, he is, as a body and mind, subject to law—the laws of his own nature, the laws of external nature. It is always open to him to commit suicide, but so long as he lives, individually and racially, the greatest part of his life is determined by the fact that he must eat and drink, satisfy his sexual instincts, propagate his species, clothe and house himself, and protect himself against the rigours of nature. Another part of it is determined by the fact that he is, by his constitution, a social and thinking being, capable of love and selfishness, and of pursuing, in whatever degree, health, beauty, knowledge, self-command, and self-direction. Almost all man's continuous activities, indeed—his activities in industry, politics, morals, art, literature and science—are now, and always have been, activities which have no necessary reference to " supernaturalism," and would still be imposed upon him, by his situation and his governing attributes, if all the churches in the world were closed to-morrow. Catholicism, or Christianity, may pass from the human mind, or be transformed by it, as ancient Paganism passed from it, or was transformed ; but if this happens, the Universe will remain and man will remain—the supreme Environment and the supreme Organism ; and each of these related powers will go on working according to its own nature until, in some far-distant day—if we are to accept our modern scientific eschatology—they cease to work entirely, and man, the " well-graced actor," quits the stage because the stage no longer affords him a foothold.

With this ultimate catastrophe—in so far as we can conceive it—we are not called upon to concern ourselves. If such a destiny awaits mankind, we can no more avert it than we can avert the destructive earthquakes and

volcanic eruptions with which the benevolence of the Christian "Creator," or of Comte's deified cosmos, from time to time exercises itself. The business of human life—man's action upon the external world and upon himself, for his preservation and fulfilment, according to his varying needs and capacity—has to be carried on, under conditions which we have not chosen, and cannot change. Relatively to these inevitable ends, supernaturalism, in whatever form, has now no value, and cannot even be said—objectively understood, and apart from the poetic and anthropomorphic construction of it—to constitute a state of reason. The churches professedly founded on it are visibly surrendering such social authority as they possessed to the neutral and secular State, which exercises its sovereignty in the ecclesiastical sphere, as well as in morals, education, industry and politics proper. From birth to death men may now live their lives, and discharge every social function, private and civic, without the acknowledgment of any theological Belief whatever. The public opinion on which all government and all international action depend is an anarchy, expressed in interminable discussions, and is only tempered by conflicting economic interests, or by the arbitrary decisions of so-called "majorities." Under these conditions no one can say when, if ever, a true spiritual order will arise, or how many will enter into it—an order not imposed by political power, but freely willed and maintained by individual men and women, choosing in common the great things of goodness, beauty and knowledge, and so forming a high fellowship or church. Comte, whatever his limitations or defects, has given to the world a vision and synthesis of such an order. Let him have the credit of them; and—until there arises a greater mind with a greater vision—let those who cherish this ideal freely accept from him, as from other thinkers, such contributions as he has to make to the science of a new Humanity.

A New Spiritual Order.

INDEX

Aids to Worship, the author's, 199
Allman, Dr., 169
Altars, in Positivism, 139, 154, 195
Ambiguities and illusions, in Positivism, 91
Anarchy, the modern spiritual, 143
Anglicanism, and posture in prayer, 87
Annual addresses, the author's, 178
Annual Circulars, Comte's and Laffitte's, 82; the author's, 177
Arnold, Matthew, and culture, 25; the author and, 39; his *Literature and Dogma*, 50; his *Rugby Chapel*, 62; and "sweet reasonableness," 202; and Catholicism, 215

Beesly, Professor, and the author, 116
Being, meaning of the term, 30; as a Positivist word, 111
Belief, meaning of, 30; state of, 34; choice of, 35, 36; and Darwinism, 38
Benediction, a "positivized," 197
Besant, Mrs., 53; her association with Bradlaugh, 54; publication of the *Fruits of Philosophy*, *ib.*; and the author's hymns, 55; her latest gospel, *ib.*
"Bible eights" and "Liberal eights," 57
Bible, the, author's love for, 39; in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, 45
Black gowns and surplices, 26
Blanchard, Laman, and James Quin, 20
Boer War, the, 171, 172, 173; Positivists and the, *ib.*
Bradlaugh, Charles, and Secularism, 45; his alleged challenge to God, *ib.*; in the law courts, 54; in debate, 56; his republicanism, 64; his political ambitions, *ib.*; at a Newcastle meeting, 65
Brazilian Positivists, 122; their religious temper and action, 123
Buddhism, and prayer, 144

Carlyle, Thomas, and the modern university, 25; his influence on the author, 38; and religious anarchy, 213
Carson, Dr., and Liverpool Positivism, 118, 119; and Catholic churches, 121
Catholicism and the Modern Mind, the author's, 220, 221
Catholicism and Positivism, the words, 198, 199
Catholicism, Roman, comprehensive of positive Christianity, 30; its dogmas, *ib.*; its poetry and theology, 31; and indulgences, 32; and the word "being," *ib.*; and the Church of England, 34; the choice of, 219; its congregations, 220; and pessimism, 244
Catholic Church, the, as fairyland, 219
Celleni, Benvenuto, and autobiography, 9
"Chapel Street," and English Positivism, 84; legends of, 130; after Dr. Congreve, 168
Charlton, Eustace, 102, 174, 179, 191
Christianity, as a synthesis, 41
Christ, in Catholicism, 33; Comte and, 77; Congreve and, 186; in history, 187

Church and School, in Positivism, 86
Church, the author's first, 109; second, 138; third, 179, 199, 205
Church, idea of the, 201
Church of Humanity, the first, 129, 130
Churches, the Christian, and Positivism, 207
Clotilde de Vaux, and Comte, 78; and a Positivist temple in Paris, 223
Coltishall Village, 19
Comte, Auguste, as a religious founder, 10; his intellectual universality, 25; his appeal to the author, 41; his synthesis, *ib.*; his *Positive Philosophy*, 72; his later works, 74; and the Positive Religion, 75; his moral life, 78; and Clotilde de Vaux, *ib.*; and Dante, 79; his changes, *ib.*; and the Jesuits, 80; and journalism, *ib.*; and Greek, 83; and medicine, 128; and Christian Churches, 139; and government, 175; and the theatre, 180; and democracy, 181; and fetishism, 186; his mistakes, 187; and religious anarchy, 213; and Catholic services, 214, 218
Congreve, Dr. Richard, the founder of English Positivism, 10; his failure, *ib.*; author's correspondence with, 71; proposes to restore Gibraltar to Spain, 82; forms a new Positivist group, *ib.*; connection with Dr. Arnold, *ib.*; tutor at Wadham College, Oxford, *ib.*; an Anglican clergyman, *ib.*; view of Manning and Newman, 83; his edition of Aristotle's *Politics*, *ib.*; his medical degree, 83; an unpaid Positivist priest, *ib.*; his Positivist developments, 86; Professor Beesly's view of, 90; Frederic Harrison on, 90; his estimate of some associates, *ib.*; his letters to the author, 94; his personal appearance, 96; a Quaker's estimate of, 97; the author's religious "director," 106; first lecture in Newcastle, 107; his Positivist influence, 117; his death, 167; his place in Positivism, 167, 168; and self-suppression, 202
Congreve, Mrs., 131
Correspondence, a missionary, 165
Creed, an Italian Positivist, 153
Creeds, the Nicene and Athanasian, 38
Crompton, Albert, 118; his wife, *ib.*; their visit to Newcastle, 121; his poetic homage to her, *ib.*; his religious action, *ib.*, 149; his correspondence with the author, *ib.*
Crompton, Henry, 110; his wife, *ib.*; his services to Labour, *ib.*; his "plunge into prayer," 111; and the Chapel Street Church, 129
Crucifix, the, in Positivism, 154

Development, Catholic and Protestant, 242
Dircks, W. H., 102
Disorder, and order, Comte on, 182; the author and, *ib.*
Dixon, Canon, his Positivist sonnet, 113

Edinburgh, visits to, 66; its Secularism, *ib.*, 101
Eddy, Mrs., as a religious founder, 10
Education, the Positivist domestic, 159; and the college system, 160
Eliot, George, the author's reading of, 39; and the Congreves, 83
Elizabeth, Queen, and Protestantism, 21
"Emancipation," Positivist meaning of, 81, 185
Experiments, the author's religious, 184

Festivals, Positivist, 155
Findley, George, the author's friendship with, 44; his Positivism, 62, 100

Foote, G. W., 55; his Secularist papers, 56; author's relations with, 65; his cartoons, 68; disagreement with, *ib.*; a letter from, *ib.*; his imprisonment, 69; his defence of French Catholics, 70; his character and death, *ib.*
Franco-Prussian War, 26
Free Churches, the term, 21
Freethinkers, author's lectures to, 39; and Comte, 41

Geddes, Professor Patrick, 101
Gimson, Josiah, and Leicester Secularism, 49
Gladstone, Mr., and "school board religion," 57; and church attendance, 215
Glasse, Rev. Dr., and Old Grey Friars, Edinburgh, 67; visit to the author's church, *ib.*; his Socialism, *ib.*
God, the word, 186; as Christ, 196; as Humanity, *ib.*
Grant, William, his Positivism, 63
Grant-Duff, M. E., and Catholic services, 217

Hall, Robert, his educational counsels to the author, 24
Harrison, Frederic, 39; and the "Newton Hall" Positivists, 84, 85; his lecture in Newcastle, 115; as a "social barometer," 116
Harrison, Mrs. Frederic, and the author's hymns, 115
Herford, Bishop, and the author, 209
Hindu Positivists, 171
Holyoake, George Jacob, and Secularism, 45; impressions of, 46; his connection with Comte, 47
Hügel, Baron von, 223
Hutton, Henry Dix, 169
Hymns, the author's early, 52; of history, 152

Independent Labour Party, the, 224, 226
Imitation of Christ, the, its influence on the author, 39; Comte and, 77; the Virgin in, *ib.*; readings from, 107
Immaculate Conception, dogma of, 20
Immortality, idea of, 36
India, and Positivism, 83
Ingram, Dr. J. K., 170; and Christ, 189; his rupture with the author, 190
Instability, religious, 134

Johnson, Dr., and reading, 25
Journalism, Comte on, 80; the author and, 104; his abandonment of, 148

Kitchin, Dean, and the author, 178; his "pacifism," *ib.*
Kitson, Mr., Master of Melton Church School, 23; and Hood's "Song of the Shirt," *ib.*; and death of Cardinal Wiseman, *ib.*

Laffitte, Pierre, the "director of Positivism," 81; a professor at the Sarbonne, *ib.*; dissatisfaction with his direction, 82
Lagarrigue, Jorge, his visit to Newcastle, 122; his religious mission to Paris, 123
Language, the universal, in Positivism, 141
League of Nations, the, 231
Leicester, author's removal to, 24; its Radicalism, 25; its Nonconformity, 26; its High Church movement, 27; its churches, *ib.*; character as a town, 43; its Secularism, 46; its Secular Hall, 49
Lewes, George Henry, author's study of, 39; and the Positivist Catechism, 98
"Light of the World," Holman Hunt's, 196
Literature, Positivism and, 137
Liverpool Positivists, 117; their Falkland Street Church, 122

MacDonald, Ramsay, and the Great War, 227; a talk with, 231

Magee, Bishop, his preaching, 28; sayings and characteristics, *ib.*
Man, conception of, 245; and law, *ib.*
Mann, Monsignor Horace, 205
Marriage, the Positivist sacrament of, 157
Martin, Sir T. C., one of the first journalistic knights, 66
Mass, the, "positivization" of, 193, 194, 198
Mathew, Archbishop, and the author, 209
Melton Mowbray, the author and, 22; its church, 23; its Church school, *ib.*
Mendes, M. Teixiera, and Brazilian Positivism, 124
Mill, John Stuart, 39; his *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, *ib.*; his attitude to Comte, 40
Miller, Thomas, the novelist, 20
Modernism, theological, 38; conception, 242
Modern Mind, the, idea of, 232; religion and, 233; Comte and, 235 *et seq.*; woman and, 238
Monasteries and beer, 59
Morley, Lord, 39; the author as election agent for, 103; and the author, 135; on Positivism, 136; a letter from, *ib.*; and the Boer War, 171; and the Great War, 228; last words to the author, 229
Mother and Child, the, symbol of, 165
Music, in worship, 151

Names, in Positivism, 140
Nativity, the, Positivist festival of, 187, 188; Dr. Ingram and, 189; Albert Crompton and, 191
Newcastle Daily Leader, the, author's connection with, 104
Newcastle-on-Tyne, author's settlement in, 60; its old Lecture Room, 65; its first Positivist meetings, 99; a "be-lectured city," 100; author's last work in, 230; farewell to, 231
"Newton Hall," and English Positivism, 84; and Comte's sacraments, 85
Nietzsche, as a Christian, 70
Nineteenth century, the, its oracles, 38

Old Catholics, the, 209
Order, a new spiritual, 246
Origin of Species, the, publication of, 20
Osborne, Canon, and the author, 208
Oxford Movement, the, 21

Paganism, its attractiveness, 36; in Catholicism, 194
Pascal, and Humanity, 112; and man, 245
Patriotic Union, the, author's formation of, 163; and the League of Nations, 164
Paul, C. Kegan, and Positivism, 132; his conversion to Catholicism, *ib.*; letter from, 133
Perfection, religion as, 239
Petre, Miss M. D., 210
Philosophy, theological and metaphysical, 72; positive, 73 Comte's "First," 158
Pius IX, and the modern mind, 20
Political Tracts, the author's, 162
Politics of the Proletariat, the author's, 209
Positive Religion, and the older Beliefs, 108
Positivism, General View of, 40
Positivist apostles, their difficulties, 147; their aims, 183
Positivist Catechism, the, use of, 98, 106; Congreve's translation of, *ib.*
Positivist churches, 100
Positivist movement, the, European, 9
Positivist social reunions, 161
Positivists, their divisions, 91, 95, 124; number of, *ib.*
"Positivization," of Catholicism, 185, 192; of the Mass, 193
Possibilities, human, 243

Prayer, in Positivism, 87, 123; posture in, *ib.*; Freethinkers and, 144; and God, *ib.*
Preaching, Catholic, 218
Priest, a Modernist, and the author, 212
Priesthood, the Positivist, 125, 126, 134
Problem of Human Peace, the author's
Protestantism, its nature, 176; and Positivism, *ib.*
Publishing system, Comte and the, 163

Quakers, and nakedness, 143; and Catholics, 217
Quin, James, and Bentham's skull, 20
Quin, Frances, her musical services, 107, 151, 164; and Positivist domestic education, 159, 203
Quin, Malcolm, and the Positivist priesthood, 10, 125, 127, 134; birth, 19; his father, *ib.*; mother, 20; studies, 25; early political interests, *ib.*; early religious influences, 28, 29, 42; lectures to Leicester Secularists, 50; contributions to *National Reformer*, 51; hymn-writing, 52; at Catholic services, 58; and a Leicestershire monastery, *ib.*; first impressions of Newcastle, 60; lectures to Newcastle Secularists, 64; need for a Church, 71; adhesion to Positivism, 96; beginnings of apostolate, 98; marriage, 102; first lectures on Positivism, 105; first and last churches, 109; his Apostolic Letter, 169; a worshipper in the Catholic Church, 214

Rabelais' "Great Perhaps," 36
Religion, the word, 41; Comte and, 73; of Humanity, 76; and worship, 93
Religious League, Comte's proposed, 80, 188
Renan, and Positivism, 239
Revue Occidentale, the, 85
Rhys, Ernest, 102
"Right" and "Wrong," individual conceptions of, 42
Robertson, J. M., and Edinburgh Secularism, 66; and the *National Reformer*, 67; his political and literary work, *ib.*; and the Boer War, 173; and the author, *ib.*
Robson, Lord, and Positivism, 113
Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, Comte's residence in, 81

Sacerdotal Fund, the, in Positivism, 80
Sacraments, the Positivist, 125, 140, 149; the author's administration of, 156
St. Dominic's, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 215, 225
Secessions, from Positivism, 91, 111, 133, 142 176, 198, 200, 201
Secularism and the Victorian age, 44; its founder, 45; its organization, *ib.*; and the Bible, *ib.*; its Leicester "Upper Chamber," 47; Newcastle meetings, *ib.*; its need for a "little Hell," 48; its hymn-books, 52; in Edinburgh, 66
Singing, congregational, 216
Smith, Joseph, as a religious founder, 10
Snell, Rev. B. J., 103
Spiritualism, author's study of, 42; and Positivism, 142; and immortality, 143
Style, Mrs., 122, 150, 154
Style, Sydney, 122
Submission, spiritual, 175
"Subsidy," the author's Positivist, 145, 181; Dr. Congreve and, *ib.*
Sulman, Thomas, 131
Sunderland, its "Free Associate Church," 101; author's missions to, 164

Taylor, Jeremy, the author and, 39
Theology, in Catholicism, 34
Thomson, James, and Secularism, 49

Trinity, the Positivist, 129, 154
Tyrrell, Father, and the author, 200, 207, 210; and revolution, 211; his death, *ib.*

Unbelief, meaning of, 35; causes of, 35, 37; its lack of synthesis, 41
Unitarianism and rationality, 38
Utopia of the Virgin Mother, Comte's, 193

Vestments, Positivist, 87, 155, 196
Virgin, the, place of in Catholicism and Positivism, 77; Positivist festival of, 186

War, and the cost of living, 20, 202
Warkworth, as a holiday resort, 112
Weddell, George, 220
West Hartlepool, and Positivism, 174
Wordsworth, his *Recluse* quoted, 11
Worship, idea of, 93; author's development of, 151 *et seq.*; offices of public, 152, 153, 196; and synthesis, 157; Comte's system of, 158

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